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# Royal Commission recommends major changes for Natives

**Alan Doerksen**

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — After six years of consultations, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Rights has made its report, calling on the federal government to make major changes in the way it deals with aboriginals and to recognize and correct past injustices. Christian groups such as the Canadian Council of Christian Reformed Churches, Citizens for Public Justice and the Canadian Council of Churches have expressed their support for the report's recommendations and hope that the government will carry them out.

In late November, Georges Erasmus (former Grand Chief of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada) and Rene Dussault (a judge on Quebec's Supreme Court), co-chairs of the royal commission, announced the final report. The commission was formed in 1990 in response to the violent confrontation between Natives and non-Natives in Oka, Quebec. Since then, it has produced a five-book report which examines the present situation of Canada's Native people, criticizes the government's past treatment of Natives, and makes recommendations on how to improve the situation. The process would take a 20-year commitment from provincial and federal governments and would cost billions of dollars.

## Tribunal to honor treaties

The commission claims that Canada's aboriginal people were recognized as nations by early European settlers, and that this was confirmed by a Royal Proclamation in 1763. There was no conquest and no giving up of rights, but instead, a partnership was expressed in law. But violation of agreements and refusal to live up to legal obligations have been the core of the problem between Natives and non-Natives.

CC FILES

*Native people collecting treaty money in Alberta in the 1950s.*

To address this problem, the commission wants an independent tribunal to be formed to make sure treaties are honored and land claim processes are not being abused.

The commission also recommends Native self-government, stating that Natives already have the right to this, recognized in Section 35 of the Constitution. Self-government should be based on up to 80 historic "first nations," such as the Algonquin, the Cree and the Inuit. Self-government wouldn't mean separate countries, but rather a new level of government within Canada for Native people.

The commission wants the Canadian government to make a clear commitment to renewing the relationship between aboriginal and other Canadians, and suggests this be done by a new royal proclamation, issued by the Queen, reflecting the Proclamation of 1763.

It is also recommended that a new Aboriginal Relations Department and an Indian and Inuit Services Department be created to replace the present Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Before the federal government carries out these recommendations, the commission wants a conference of first ministers and aboriginal leaders so as to achieve a wide consensus on these issues.

## Breaking the chains

The cost of the commission's recommendations would be $1.5 billion for the first five years and up to $2 billion a year for the next 15 years. Despite this, the commission believes that money could be saved through the changes. It claims that $7.5 billion is lost each year because of income not earned by Natives and the resulting lack of taxes they pay, and because of remedial programs to offset the effects of poverty, bad health and social problems among aboriginals.

Arie Van Eek, executive director of the Council of

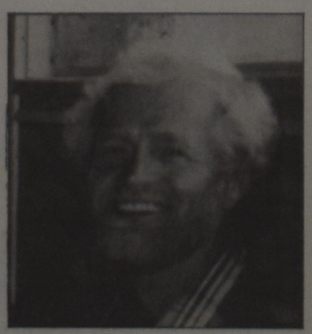
*See* **CHRISTIAN** *page 2...*

# *Small Alberta town takes on big social issue*

**Cindy Bruin**

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE, Alta. — After four years of government-approved video lottery terminal (VLT) gambling in Alberta, pastors in the town of Rocky Mountain House are challenging the presumed benefits of VLTs and are pushing for a town plebiscite banning the machines from the community.

Philip Stel, pastor of the Rocky Mountain House Christian Reformed Church, is the chairperson of the Rocky and District Ministerial Association. He says that all 14 of the ministers involved (representing denominations ranging from Catholic and Anglican to Pentecostal and Baptist) support the move.



COURTESY JACK DE BOER

*Philip Stel*

Church members have 60 days to collect at least 600 signatures (10 per cent of the population) in order to force a vote on the issue. "That way," says Stel, "the people of Rocky Mountain House can discuss if this is the kind of community that Rocky wants to be. It's an opportunity to talk about the issue (of VLTs) together."

The impetus for the ministerial association's move came from a layperson who suggested taking on VLTs as a way to address broad issues of community concern, noting the social damage caused by gambling (and especially VLT) addiction. But the initial action by church leaders has snowballed into a bigger challenge: taking on town council, hotel owners and the provincial government itself.

Opposition to the initiative focuses on the consequences to the community if VLTs are eliminated. The Alberta government has said that because VLTs comprise the majority of lottery fund revenues, all lottery funding would be denied to Rocky

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News

# Christian groups call for action on Native rights

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Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, agrees with much of the commission's report. He has helped to draft an open letter from the Committee for Ministry with Indians and Metis in Canada to Canadian CRCs which supports the main recommendations.

A draft version of this letter states that the report presents a challenge to Christian Reformed people "to examine the lives of our churches to ascertain how our communities can be God's hands and voices of healing in the relationship between our peoples, and where the deep rifts and wounds which divide us touch our own communities and need to be addressed.... Our ministries ask you, the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, to join us in seeking God's shalom, which reconciles brother and sister, rich and poor, Native and non-Native. We ask you to pray with us that Christ will break the chains of despair, violence and death."

Van Eek especially supports the idea of an independent tribunal to settle Native land claims. This is necessary because "our governments change every four or five years" and don't always follow up on the promises of previous governments.

Despite the cost of the recommendations, Van Eek asserts, "The proposals will prove to be cost-effective. What we're doing now is paying perpetual welfare.... None of us like to accept welfare. The Natives don't either." We need to take into account the long-term benefits of the programs, he adds.

Van Eek is doubtful about the federal government's reaction to the report. "We think the government will take a look at it, but we're wondering how seriously they'll look at it."

"The release of this report is an important opportunity for Canada," asserts Dr. Alexandra Johnston, president of the Canadian Council of Churches. "Our hope is that this report will help us identify the concrete steps that Canadians can take to ensure a more secure and healthy future for aboriginal communities."

### Government must take it to heart

Ed Bianchi, national co-ordinator for the Aboriginal Rights Coalition, says, "This report will only be worthwhile if governments, and the federal government in particular, live up to their responsibility to act on the report's positive recommendations. ARC and the churches intend to hold the government accountable."

"It's five minutes to midnight in Canada's relationship with First Nations," asserts Lorraine Land, of Citizens for Public Justice. "The federal government and the people of Canada are on the hook: Will we take up the challenge and address historic and ongoing injustices before it's too late?"

CPJ specifically supports the recommendations of a royal proclamation, an independent tribunal and a first ministers conference to review the recommendations.

Harry Groenewold, a professor of Canadian and European history at the King's University College in Edmonton, favors the report's recommendations in spite of their high price-tag. "The cost over the 20-year lifespan is quite reasonable," he says. Groenewold hopes the federal government will "go ahead with this as soon as possible," but adds, "I don't expect them to act very quickly." But he expects Native leaders such as Georges Erasmus to make the report an issue and continue promoting it.

Groenewold says it's true that early European settlers in Canada recognized Natives as distinct communities. "The Indians never fundamentally gave up their aboriginal rights," he says, but "there was conquest.... There has been systematic erosion of rights."

*(See related stories on page 20 )*

# Alberta town points out consequences of gambling

... continued from page 1

Mountain House. Community leaders point to the $657,000 in lottery grant money received in the past four years as an economic benefit, and hotel owners want the revenue and business VLTs bring.

### Only a pittance returned

Stel counters the financial arguments by noting that if each of the 37 VLTs in Rocky Mountain House takes in an average of $76,000 a year, then the government would be drawing about $2.4 million a year out of the community ($2.82 million less the 15 per cent fees paid to licensees.) "And we get to rejoice," says Stel, "that about $150,000 per year came back in to the community through the Lottery Funds!"

Ultimately, however, the VLT issue is about the social consequences of this highly addictive form of gambling: VLT revenue has, in four years, grown to make up three quarters of the total government lottery income. Since becoming involved with the issue Stel has learned numerous accounts of families and individuals affected by VLT gambling.

"The economic and social damage from VLTs is incredible," says Stel. He points to examples of families who have lost their farms or mortgaged their homes to cover gambling debts, or individuals whose gambling passion has led to crime. Social workers have talked to Stel about children who indirectly suffer the consequences of a parent's addiction.

Although for church members gambling is also a moral issue, the Rocky Mountain House pastors have singled out VLT abuse based on its social consequences. "We're approaching this issue on a community, family and social basis," Stel explains.

### 'Legislating morality'?

Stel says some have questioned the ministerial association's move as an attempt to "legislate morality." Stel says that "the fact of the matter is that we've had immorality foisted on us. Nobody asked us four years ago if we wanted VLTs, but now, four years later, we can see the impact."

As the first community in Alberta to potentially challenge VLTs, Rocky Mountain House has been the focus of strong political and media attention. Opposition party MLAs have publicly commended the church leaders, and newspaper and television coverage has spread even beyond provincial borders. Christians in other communities may be challenged by the work of this interdenominational group, and can pray for the success of this venture.

# Canadian CRCs speak out against gambling

**Cindy Bruin**

CALGARY — While churches in Rocky Mountain House have taken up a direct attack on VLTs in their community, this venture is not the first time Christian Reformed Church members have challenged government lottery involvement in Alberta.

In February 1995 the Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) of the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada made a presentation to Alberta's lottery review committee, noting that the CCG "strongly opposes all government participation in gambling." The CCG highlighted concerns about gambling and gambling addiction and also noted the "danger of the government itself becoming addicted to the seductive appeal of lottery revenues."

One local congregation, First Christian Reformed Church in Calgary, also addressed the lottery review committee, including a specific concern about VLTs. The church submission stated: "While the government may gain some financial benefit through increased VLT popularity, Alberta as a society is suffering a loss in overall well-being when we recognize the far-reaching consequences for the problem gambler as well as his/her family members, workplace and community, which all indirectly pay the price of each new addicted gambler. What, then, is the net gain?"

### Seven deadly reasons

The province of Ontario is also now grappling with the allure of easy government income through VLTs. In August 1996, the CCG addressed the Ontario standing committee on administration of justice, arguing against passage of Bill 75, which would introduce VLTs to Ontario. CCG stated that we "express our deep dismay about the government's active and ongoing involvement in the sorry business of gambling."

The CCG presentation highlighted several concerns specifically related to VLTs:

1. They are highly addictive.
2. Their wide and easy accessibility encourages broad participation.
3. VLTs are "user friendly."
4. Computers appeal to the young.
5. VLTs feed the hungry for "quick fix" solutions to complex problems.
6. VLTs "democratize" gambling, becoming more accessible for those who can't afford casinos.
7. VLTs denigrate honest work.

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Marian den Boer

# *Is divine healing authentic?*

## Divine Healing

*Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits -- who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,...*
Psalm 103:2-3

I used to think the white Wonder bread our church serves for the Lord's Supper was a poor symbol. I thought serving nutritious 100 per cent whole wheat bread would be more meaningful. But now, after being healed of recurring backaches and then reading a book on divine healing, I think the white Wonder bread is totally appropriate.

Let me explain. A backache used to put me flat out. To move caused excruciating pain. This would happen about twice a year. The doctor told me to sleep with a pillow between my knees as a preventive measure. I also learned exercises to strengthen my stomach muscles, tried to avoid stressful situations and never sat in soft chairs.

Then a year and a half ago, about the first time I went to the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship, I was inexplicably healed. I haven't had a backache since. I stopped sleeping with a pillow between my knees, I sit on soft chairs, and I write articles that could cause stress. I've also had a baby — an event in my life previously always associated with backache. If I went down with a backache, friends would ask if, perchance, I was pregnant.

### What about that Wonder bread?

So what has this got to do with white Wonder bread at the Lord's Supper? In a book entitled *Healing the Sick*, T. L. Osborn explains the doctrine of divine healing. (This is a doctrine the Christian Reformed Church seems not to have adopted yet. A friend, who is battling lupus, figures it must be stuck in synod somewhere.)

According to T. L. Osborn, the wine at the Lord's Supper represents the shed blood of Jesus for the remission of sins. The bread represents the wounded body for the healing of diseases which are the result of original sin. He also explains that the Old Testament serpent on the pole in the wilderness symbolizes Christ as a healer.

This could be just so much theological pie in the sky on Osborn's part, except that his book documents evidence of divine healing taking place at crusades, mostly in Third World countries in the 30 years from 1950 to 1980.The healings are a major tool for evangelism. At the Osborn crusades when people see what Jesus can do, they believe. The lame, the blind, the deaf, lepers, and people with cancer are healed as they listen and pray. It's all in the book, along with pictures.

Osborn points out that this is the way Jesus did it during his ministry on earth. He healed everyone who came to him. Then, in Luke 10, we read how Jesus sent out the 72 with instructions to heal the sick and tell the people about the Kingdom.

To someone like myself, who without an apparent medical reason no longer suffers from backaches, this teaching on divine healing sounds very convincing.

*Marian den Boer lives with her husband and six children in Hamilton, Ont. She'll let us know when her inactive thyroid gland starts up.*

# Inner-city mission celebrates 100 years of service to the poor

**Robert VanderVennen**

TORONTO — Yonge Street Mission gave thanks to God at a gala luncheon on Nov. 28, coincidentally American Thanksgiving Day. The 250 people present gave thanks for the mission's 100 years of witness to God's saving grace in downtown Toronto. The cost of the luncheon at the King Edward Hotel was largely covered by anonymous gifts from mission supporters.

Executive director Rick Tobias announced a major new project called "Hopeworks" which will launch the mission into its next 100 years. The program is specifically designed to meet the needs of the poor and its financial goal of $4 million will be raised chiefly from business partners. The aim is to buy and renovate a large downtown building to house business activities to help the poor.

The great need today is jobs, and in this building the mission wants to facilitate the start of job-generating ventures by private entrepreneurs. There will be space for a used clothing superstore, a computer literacy program for children, a revolving loan fund for local micro-enterprises, a cheque-cashing service, other financial enterprises, and even church services.

The mission was founded by businessman John Coolidge "Hallelujah" Davis in order to offer food, clothing and a gospel message to poor homeless men in the downtown area. Today the need is no less great among individuals and families in "a city core of bright lights and great poverty," as Rev. Dr. John Gladstone expressed it in his invocation.

KEU GASKIN

*Rev. John Gladstone speaks at Yonge Street Mission's anniversary.*

### Same focus as always

In its early days the mission held regular Sunday worship services, which later became Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, where Gladstone served as pastor for many years.

Throughout its history the mission has remained focused on ministry to the downtown poor, though the concept of "rescue mission" has changed. Today's staff runs a diversity of relief and development programs and has an annual budget of over $3 million.

Also in those early years the mission was known for its free Sunday breakfasts to hungry men, its "Gospel Wagon" and Sunday School, which served people whose poverty was all too clear.

### Haunting faces

Board treasurer John Fenton writes in the anniversary booklet that when he was about 14 years old his father, a physician, "invited me to accompany him to a little mission in the city where he had been asked to speak.... I remember the look of despair on so many of those faces, making an indelible impression on my mind.... Little did I imagine that 50 years later I would be on the board of directors of this place which has been a beacon of light in the midst of darkness for so many people."

The mission today operates a drop-in centre called Evergreen for street kids on Yonge Street. Kids are offered refreshments and conversation with a trained staff member. There is an art shop where youth can create art works, a medical clinic whose services include eye examinations, foot care and dentistry. Hal's Sandwich Shop offers refreshments and job training.

On Gerrard Street near Parliament the mission has its Christian Community Centre. Services there are a used clothing store, food bank and day care centre. Besides hot meals, the centre has a breakfast club, senior's Bible study, boys' club, Sunday school, ceramics class, church services and more.

Genesis Place is a 26-unit apartment complex built and run by the mission because "without secure housing you can't get out of poverty," the mission says.

The call for the mission's services is at a peak right now because government welfare cuts have badly hurt the poor. The mission finds that homeless and unemployed people are as badly off today as they have ever been in the past 100 years.

A striking feature of the mission's operation is its success in gaining the partnership of the city of Toronto and of downtown businesses. The mission's list of corporate supporters is long. Yet 69 per cent of its annual operating budget comes from donations from 4,500 individuals, and 16 per cent comes from 180 different churches.

The Yonge Street Mission says it is "called to bring God's peace, dignity and justice to the poor and needy in downtown Toronto." The mission concludes: "We believe that all individuals are created in the image of God and should have the opportunity for a full and just participation in society."

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Editorial

# In answer to Jesus' question: we need to pester God more

Jesus once made a half-question/ half-statement that has haunted believers throughout the ages. After he told the parable of the persistent widow, he said, "However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" Did Jesus predict a falling away here? Or did he just wonder what would happen to the church?

Whatever it was, Jesus made an interesting jump in his thinking. He had just finished encouraging his disciples not to give up praying by telling them about a widow who managed to get justice from a hard-hearted judge ("who neither feared God nor cared about men"). She pestered him day after day with the same request, "Grant me justice against my adversary."

From his immediate concern that his disciples ought never to give up asking what is right from God (who, unlike the judge, very much cares about people), Jesus suddenly moves to a concern for the long haul of discipleship. His mind skips to the end of time. Will people keep on praying throughout the ages the way the persistent widow did?

At the end of 1996, we are closer to that end time than the disciples were. So the question is more pertinent for us today than it was for them. Will Jesus find faith on earth? Will he find people praying and not giving up?

## Desire for missions is waning

I was reminded of this question when Dr. John Paul Roberts of the Juan Calvino Theological Seminary of Mexico spoke in southern Ontario a few weeks ago. He was talking about a general minimizing of evangelism among Western churches, especially the mainline churches. He traced this to several causes: the isolating tendencies of information overload and of super specialization, as well as the increasing adaptation of theologies to human freedom issues, resulting in such "contextual theologies" as black theology, feminist theology and liberation theology. All of these things hinder a healthy overview of missions and isolate us from each other and from the broad sweep of the Kingdom.

*And so we are afraid of the charge that we are imposing our faith on others.*

In addition Dr. Roberts spoke of a prevailing human loneliness that does not allow us to reach out to others, as well as a fear that we will repeat the sometimes too triumphalist and imperialist approach to missions used in the past. And so we apologize for mistakes in the past and are afraid of the charge that we are imposing our faith on others. All of this renders us impotent when it comes to spreading the Good News.

If what Dr. Roberts says is true, and we sense that it is, are we not in the process of fulfilling Jesus' half-question/half-statement: "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

## His conscience bothered him

Fortunately, Dr. Roberts gave us a prescription for this malaise. He told us a story about a run-down church building in a village in Mexico. Almost a hundred years ago this church was filled with people praying to God in the name of Jesus. It was a Presbyterian church that had been formed through the missionary efforts of a British engineer.

In earlier years, this Calvinist scientist had been hired by a mining company to extract more gold from mines than Spanish conquerors in earlier centuries had been able to extract from them with somewhat primitive technology. Through the aid of more modern technology and the cheap labor of indigenous people the man succeeded in taking more gold from the mines, and he returned to England a millionaire.

But while in England, the man's conscience began to bother him. He had done exactly what the Spanish had done before him, he told himself. He had plundered the resources of an area in Mexico, and he had done it at the expense of the local Indian population, whom he had left in abject poverty.

This thought bothered him so much that he decided to sell everything he had, return to the village in Mexico and bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people he had formerly exploited. His efforts paid off. The whole village came to Christ and a vital Presbyterian church was established. However, upon his death, there was no one to continue his ministry. The church fell into decline. Eventually, the people returned to their animistic religion.

## The prayers of five women

About half a century later, Dr. John Paul Roberts passed through the village and became curious about a dilapidated building that seemed to have been a splendid church at one time, with thick stone walls. As he walked inside, he saw five women at prayer. He asked them what they were praying about. They told him that for years they had been praying that God would restore the church to its former glory. As he further talked with them and others in the village, he came to realize that the people thought of themselves as Presbyterians, but that they had completely lost the content of the Christian faith. They no longer knew what the gospel was about. Yet these women had continued to pray to the God of that church day after day, year after year.

I don't know whether these women were widows, but, after pestering God for years, God heard their prayer by sending Dr. Roberts, who vowed that he would take up the challenge of doing missionary work among them. The result is that today there is again a vital Presbyterian church in this Mexican village.

And herein lies the answer to Jesus' question: "When the Son of Man comes back, will there be faith on this earth?" It all depends on whether or not we continually pray to God that his Kingdom may come. Because when it comes down to the survival of faith, it doesn't depend so much on our efforts, not even so much on the missionary efforts of the church, although they become an important means. It hinges on the prayers of those who are eager to follow the example of five persistent women. **BW**

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Letters

# All of Creation benefits from the sacrifice of Christ

I have to take issue with your editorial of Nov. 1, 1996: "Masters of Salem, their puppies brought to Jesus."

You state: "By introducing a blessing of the animals... we raise animals to... a level they should not have — as if Christ died for them too, on the cross of Calvary. The Kingdom belongs to little children, but it does not belong to cats and dogs and cockatoos."

I understand strict Reformed theology to assert that the Fall applies not just to humans but to the whole of Creation. When Adam sinned, his sin contaminated the whole Garden, and thus the whole world, just as it tainted, in the view of that good "Reformed" theologian, St. Augustine, all of Adam's human descendants with Original Sin. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross, according to Paul, undoes Adam's sin. If Creation (including cats and dogs and cockatoos) suffers as a result of Adam's sin, then surely it should also benefit from the redemption offered on Calvary.

The prologue to John's gospel makes it clear that Jesus is more than just a human among humans. He is a cosmic event, of universal significance. All things came into being through him, John asserts. All things. With him came life — and life is not restricted to human beings.

God cares for sparrows, Jesus told us, and for lilies of the field. I doubt if we further God's Kingdom by declaring non-human beings to be outcasts, excluded — as lepers, beggars, women and Gentiles were in Jesus' society. Jesus transcended those socially imposed boundaries; is it really appropriate for us to re-impose them in new ways?

**Jim Taylor**
**Winfield, B.C.**

## *We too easily give up on praying for healing*

Reading the articles on homosexuality in Christian Courier sometime ago, I was surprised that faith healing was not mentioned.

I remember being in a Pentecostal healing service one time when a young man came onto the platform to testify to how God had healed him the night before of homosexuality. I still remember how he and the evangelist embraced each other.

In Peter and Marja's column of Sept. 13 they say that for those not married masturbation as a sexual expression is OK. I disagree with this, for with this sinful habit comes sinful imagination. Instead of condoning this sinful habit we should pray with David: "Create a new spirit within me, o Lord" (Ps.51:10).

Evangelical groups can be a great help to such persons.

Many Reformed churches have lost the Spirit. They have let themselves become defeated. Sinners have given up hope in life and accept their sins without turning to Christ for healing.

When our aim is Christ, everything in life, including our sexuality, will be properly aimed. Unclean spirits can then also be cast out.

**J. Vandenberg**
**London, Ont.**

# Slow healing came after many years

Thank you for your article by Lynn Klammer on "Facing the Facts of Sexual Assault" (Nov.1, 1996). These two sentences especially reflect my situation: "Sexual assault does not mean only 'rape.' Sexual assault is any unwanted sexual act that is attempted or completed against you."

I was sexually assaulted when I was 15 years old by my boyfriend, who was slightly older. I had no idea at that time that what was happening was wrong. I trusted this guy because he was, in my eyes, the "ideal Christian" from a solid Christian home. These sexual assaults happened a few times in the beginning of our dating, even though our relationship continued for a few more years. We never talked about "what happened."

In the meantime, what happened to me was a rollercoaster-ride of physical and emotional illnesses. None of these illnesses had a decent explanation at that time because I never told anyone what happened. Eventually, our relationship ended, but my illnesses continued many more years.

Now, some 20 years later, I can finally say the slow healing process has been completed. For this I give credit to God, my wonderful counsellor, who healed all my diseases and redeemed my life from the pit! I also thank my very patient and incredible husband, who has listened to me and supported me through my darkest nightmares.

I know that the man who sexually assaulted me reads your paper avidly. I hope he sees himself in this letter. He should know that, finally, I have been able to forgive him.

**Name withheld**

# It's not easy to find level ground

I would like to suggest to John Stronks and others who might agree with him (CC Nov. 29) that the "slippery slope" has two sides. If the legalization of divorce has led to "widespread family breakdown," has not legalism concerning marriage led to needless suffering, and prevented people from escaping evil? If feminism "yields to witchraft," has not male dominance led to abuse of women and children in homes and schools?

Certainly there are examples today of ethics and morals moving past what we would consider to be the biblical principles of justice and compassion, but there are also other areas of life to which societies are just now beginning to apply these same principles. Take the issue of homosexuality, which has been discussed in CC in recent months. Many Christians have been guilty in the past of hating both the sin and the sinner. It is difficult to find a just and compassionate middle ground.

I agree with Stronks' exposition concerning the destructive, progressive, aggressive and generational nature of sin. However, *all* sin carries these characteristics, both the sin of "liberalizing" society and the sin of "conserving" the unjust status quo. These are characteristics of *sin*, not necessarily of "liberalizing." Unfortunately, discerning sin is not as easy as identifying any change from an idealized past.

We are called to be prophetic regarding the sin of every age, and to apply the (unchanging) truth of the gospel to the (changing) times in which each generation lives. This is not as easy and unambiguous as the article makes it out to be, for there are slippery slopes on both sides of most ethical and moral issues.

**Ray Vander Zaag**
**Kanata, Ont.**

## Supports Reformed Faith Witness

Great to see your efforts expanded in forming your new organization [Reformed Faith Witness]. I fully subscribe to your statement of faith. May the Lord bless you in the year ahead and may CC flourish.

Your Christmas issue was a great inspiration. Please continue. I look forward to receiving your fine and informative publication.

**Edward N. Zwart**
**Grimsby, Ont.**


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Opinion

# 'Free to Serve' felt more like *Showboat* than a church rally

**Raymond Louter**

I was in attendance at the "Free to Serve" rally at Redeemer College on Nov. 2. I came away from the rally in such a state of confusion that I could not put my thoughts in order.

Rarely does an event as complicated as this one come off with such professionalism. The interface of theatrical and rock-show effects — including follow-spots [spotlights that "follow" a performer], with complex audio and video tracks alongside live performance — is a recipe for disaster in the hands of inexperienced people.

From this point of view, FTS was virtually flawless. Transitions from live performance to video-recorded testimonies were effortless. (Computer technology played a significant role in the execution of the rally.) Performances were exciting — especially when the children from the local Christian school joined the choir, actors, dancers and the featured performer in a choreographed musical finale. For that segment alone they deserved the standing ovation they got.

## Celebrating the CRC — or what?

Even as I rose to applaud the performers my mind was mulling over the remarks made by Peter Borgdorff, executive director of Christian Reformed World Ministries. He alerted the audience to two things: that FTS was not a worship service; and that FTS was not meant to celebrate the achievements of any one denomination, but was a celebration of God's faithfulness to his church in our society in general.

My quibble is with Borgdorff's second remark. Why did the program headline read "The Christian Reformed Church Presents: Free to Serve" and why did the body of the rally specifically focus on ministries and individuals within the CRC? I was confused. Why the apparent evasion? There is nothing inherently wrong with reflecting on what God has done within the CRC.

It was the stated purpose of FTS to be "a wonderful gathering of God's people. An event to sing, rejoice and praise God" primarily "through ordinary people..., *members of the CRC*" [italics mine].

Parts of the event were effective. Moments that stand out for me were the short videotaped segments which featured local CRC laborers — people who selflessly give of themselves to help others. Performers of note were the Kuranko singers and the Lyrical Dancers who gave expression to various spiritual truths. The most touching moment (the one that redeemed the rest of the rally for me) was the simple yet powerful storytelling of Joanna Hiemstra. I could have listened to her all night.

But in the hustle and bustle of the evening something got lost, something simple and human. Why and how did this happen?

FTS may have been a rally, but better terms to describe the event are "revue," "extravaganza" and "road show."

## Focus on the star

The roots of the musical revue go back to popular British, later American, musical revues of the 19th and early 20th centuries. This style of performance was notable for its featured star in some sort of spectacular performance.

Ensembles in various regions of the U.S. would rehearse a particular production, *sans* the featured performer or "star." The star would join the ensemble for perhaps one rehearsal before the show would open.

JOHN MORROW

*Who's the star of the "show"?*

It was the star performer who attracted the audiences. (Once the technology was available, follow-spots were used to highlight the position of the star on stage.) Often, exotic costumes were used to further highlight the outside talent. "Who would come to see mere local actors and dancers strut their stuff?" the logic went. Revues required a popular hero.

Naturally then, the revue undermined the efforts of local theatre companies to produce a unique regional drama. The revue eventually fed into the American musical, which continues to hold a dominant position in the entertainment industry in the U.S. as well as in Canada. It remains, however, a uniquely American form.

All of these elements were present in FTS. Afterwards someone said, "That was the Darlene Koldenhoven Show." Darlene Koldenhoven was clearly the star.

## Why a theatrical model for a praise evening?

Why did the organizers of FTS opt for this theatrical model for an event designed to be "a wonderful gathering of God's people." Such an event ought to centre on a community rather than on one person in it. It ought to be built primarily on the stories of faith articulated by ordinary people rather than on the talents of a star.

So what if our local soprano has only a two-octave range? It wouldn't have impressed me less. And as much as I enjoyed the attempt of CRC faithful to sing and move like a black gospel choir, some of them were just not up to it (hence the need for the over-dubbed choir?). And why should they be? CRC choirs that I've seen display their own distinctive emotional character, one not explored at all in this context.

From a production standpoint there are other implications for revue-styled rallies. Acting generally gets little attention. For a rally supposedly built on the stories of everyday people, the tellers (the actors, those poor actors!) had little to work with.

Actors are far better at *doing* than at talking, but the actors on the stage at FTS had nothing to *do*! They were illustrators, nervously scampering around the massive stage playing themselves being silly. They were, frankly, embarrassing to watch. And why?

They were not a significant part of FTS, period. They were three-dimensional segues between the rally's real "acts." I don't fault the actors. They did little because they were given little. Drama enacts human experience. Let them dwell in the grey areas between joyous faith and despair. Let them tell that story.

I'm sure many people walked out of FTS feeling good, that they were touched by what they saw and heard. But as salt-of-the-earth Calvinists know, you can't judge the value of experience by emotional reaction alone.

I walked out of FTS wowed by the execution of the event, not by the powerful working of God in the Christian community. So the experience was more like a performance of *Showboat* or *Oklahoma!* than like a celebration of Christian community.

FTS left some Canadians feeling somewhat like outsiders in their own community. Its form accommodated local people and stories, but its Broadway/Hollywood entertainment aesthetic diminished them at the same time. It was about things and people we recognize, but it came nowhere near to capturing the emotional reality of the CRC, at least in my experience.

## Whose world was represented?

"Is this the CRC that I was raised in?" I asked myself, "the Canadian CRC built by Pake Beppe and others like my grandparents?" Not by a long, long shot. Whose world *did* FTS represent, anyway?

What did I expect? Something simpler, actually. Something that allowed me to see the faith of ordinary saints, not superstars. I would like to suggest that Canadian theatrical tradition, built on simpler, community-based storytelling, would have better served a celebration of community in Canada than the revue does. Here, I must confess, is where I felt offended. Why is it that when Canadian Christians decide to stage (or even host) a big event, we so easily adopt a model from outside our own cultural traditions?

I understand that FTS was privately funded by some wealthy CRC business people. Perhaps that money should have been redistributed to smaller production teams instead of centralized in one touring road show. The CRC is a diverse, bi-national church. Perhaps the rally notion can be preserved, but can be designed according to the peculiarities found in the distinctive regions of the CRC.

I hope these observations lead to reflection on the part of Canadians who call the Christian Reformed Church their church.

*Ray Louter is head of the drama department at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont.*

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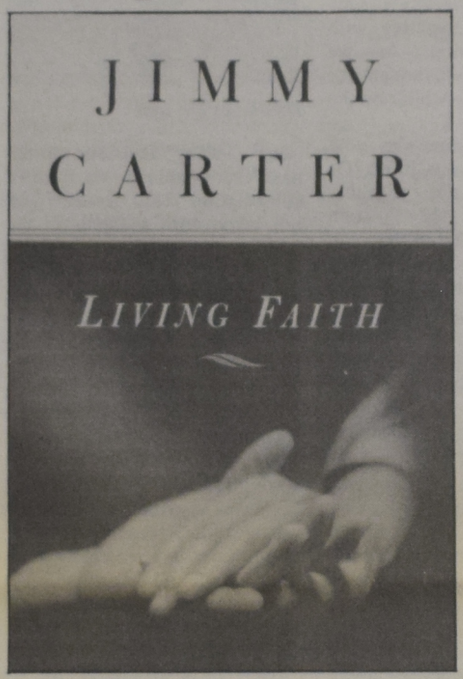
**ARTS & MEDIA**
*Living Faith*

# *Jimmy Carter explains his faith*

**Marian Van Til**

**By Jimmy Carter. *New York; Toronto: Random House (Times Books), 1996. 256 pp.; hardcover. $32 (Cdn), $23 (US)***




Former U.S. president Jimmy Carter has been called the best former president of our time. That's because rather than spending his post-presidency days on pleasure trips, playing golf, or on other solely personal matters as other former presidents who have survived that office have done, he and his wife, Rosalynn, have committed themselves to helping the poor (through Habitat for Humanity), and to mediating political problems in the world's hot spots (through the Atlanta-based Carter Center).

Carter's heart for the disadvantaged and his concern for human rights stem directly from his Christian faith, he explains. In this book, his 11th, he talks about "the values and experiences that have shaped my life, and how the religious beliefs I inherited have been transformed into a living faith."

Carter begins the book by saying he has "waited a long time to write these words, because religion is a private matter — and my own faith has been the subject of much public speculation." That statement gives Reformed readers a clue that the book is likely to elicit from them not only admiration but some frustration as well.

There's much to admire about Jimmy Carter. It's obvious that in his actions in both family and public life he wants to be motivated by Christ's love command. He tries to live the gospel as he reads it, and his attitude toward and relationship with Rosalynn and his children, and his works of philanthropy and international mediation show that he is succeeding.

### Something missing

So why my frustration? A sharing of one's wealth and a compassionate, non-judgmental approach to dealing with others, whether next door or around the world, is more than many Christians seem capable of, so what's the problem?

The "problem" is with that little phrase "religion is a private matter." Carter has been a lifelong member of the Southern Baptist Church, though his worship experience has been quite broad and many of his views are unconventional (some would say heretical) for that denomination. He obviously senses the need to integrate his faith into his *whole life*, but for all his life-long study of Scripture (he's now 70 years old), he seems not to have been able to break out of a sacred/secular, private/public mindset, and that prevents him from adopting a thoroughly biblical, all-of-life-is-religion worldview. Carter suffers from the fact, as most evangelicals do, that there is no evangelical *mind*; from the fact that the *mind* of Christ doesn't thoroughly shape his (and their) *thinking*.

Thus, Carter sees his faith impinge on his business as a peanut farmer, or his former public life as U.S. president, or his anti-poverty and human rights work to the extent that he has developed a personal morality that tries to imitate Jesus, asking when confronted with a problem: "What would Jesus do?"

I was at a meeting at which I heard Carter speak; I was impressed with his willingness to publicly talk about his faith when he thought it was appropriate. Yet a Reformed reader keeps wishing that a man of Carter's high intellect would expand on his "you in your small corner and I in mine" approach; that he would adopt a comprehensively Christian worldview that sees both a radical Fall, and radical Redemption that can bring Life not only to individual sinners but to corrupt human structures that induce poverty, to twisted political systems that foster injustice, and the like.

### Give him a book list

In the end, then, despite Carter's (rightful) insistence that Christian faith is not incompatible with intellectual and scientific inquiry, his account of his faith is intellectually unsatisfying. He makes reference to theologians and philosophers like Tillich, Kierkegaard, Bonhoeffer, Martin Buber, Hans Kung, Karl Barth and even Martin Luther. But his few references to what are essentially Calvinist thought and doctrine (like election, for instance) indicate fundamental misunderstanding. Maybe somebody should give him unlimited check-out privileges to the library at Calvin Seminary — along with a few recommendations for further reading.

In the meantime, however, let's hope that more Christians can, like Carter, "stand accused" of good works and love for their neighbor.

# Christian pop-rock singer has accidental career

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (EP) — With six albums, 14 top-five radio hits, and three consecutive Grammy nominations, Geoff Moore & The Distance have a career beginning bands can only dream about. But it wasn't a lifelong dream for Moore. In fact, he got into music by accident.

"I went to Taylor University in central Indiana, and when I got to college I heard contemporary Christian music for the first time. It really satisfied my desire for the kind of music that I loved with lyrics that really spoke to my heart. My roommate had a band and was going to play in a variety show, but they had lost their singer and needed a singer. He asked me to try. He said, 'I've heard you singing in the shower and I know you can do this.'"

From humble beginnings, Geoff Moore & The Distance have gone on to the "big time," but haven't forgotten their roots. The band has played concerts in towns that are just a blip on the map to all but those who live there. "We've had great crowds at places like that, often larger than we would have had in a main market," Moore recalls. "I think Christian music can and should go to the people. I really enjoy the smaller spots."

### Attracting both parents and kids

The group attracts a diverse audience, says Moore. "You have two generations — parents who grew up listening to rock and roll, all the way down to their kids." Above all, he hopes that listeners will leave a concert "either reassured or informed of God's unconditional love for them."

But there are plenty of other factors that go into a good concert, says Moore. "At its foundation I want it to be good art," he notes. "I want a good artistic presentation. I want to be reflective of our Creator. We're able to do these shows because we are creative people, and we are creative people because we are endowed by our Creator. When we create well, it honors the Creator."

The latest project from Geoff Moore & The Distance is a "greatest hits" album, a two-CD set that includes both studio cuts and live versions of the band's crowd-pleasing pop-rock hits. But packaged in with this celebration of the group's past is a hint of its future. The new song "Today" has a driving modern rock sound that is a significant break from the sound Moore's audiences know and love.

### Exploring new musical territory

The new sound is a bit of a risk, but one Moore feels is worth taking. "To be honest, I always envy brand-new bands," he confesses. "They come into the music scene with no preconceived notions of what people expect from them, and their music is subsequently that much more uninhibited and credible. I believe that is how we should all be making music all of the time. As a band, we are striving to be experimental and innovative, yet authentic. We want to remain true to ourselves artistically while offering a fresh take on who we are and what we have to offer."

Moore continues, "I have never felt such freedom as I do at this point. In Jesus Christ, we have a place of hope where there are no limits to what we can do. If this band can be vulnerable and transparent in our art, then we can continually look to God and pull from a bottomless sea of inspiration and ideas."

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Church

# Dutch 'visiting prof' is let go by Calvin Seminary

## *Sem president explains why*

**Marian Van Til**

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Dr. Jan Veenhof, a noted Dutch theologian who was living and working in Switzerland, was hired by Calvin Theological Seminary late last summer as "Distinguished Visting Professor of Systematic Theology" for the fall terms of 1996 and 1997 (CC, Sept. 20).

COURTESY CALVIN SEMINARY

*Dr. Jan Veenhof*

Teaching two courses, "The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit" and "The History of Reformed Theology," Veenhof completed his first fall term but won't be here for next year's term.

That's because in the interim it was discovered by the seminary that Veenhof holds views on homosexuality that are "at variance with the denomination's and the seminary's views," says seminary president Dr. James De Jong. Veenhof "accepts 'trothful homosexual relationships,' even for Reformed ministers."

### Background revealed

But contrary to circulating rumors, Veenhof was not summarily dismissed. De Jong explains the situation: Three weeks before the end of this year's fall term, "a staff member walked in here with a photocopy of an interview that Jan had granted the *Reformatorisch Dagblad* [a conservative Dutch newspaper]. He was asked pointed questions about his views on homosexuality and he gave explicit answers." Veenhof reiterated views he had expressed in a book a decade ago, a book the seminary was unaware he had written.

"I called him in and we talked very candidly on this," says De Jong, "and also about the fact that he may have been baited [by the newspaper]. Questioned about that by CC, De Jong asserts, "The Dutch reporter called him when he was in Grand Rapids to suddenly do an interview. Veenhof hasn't lived in the Netherlands for seven years. People were digging around."

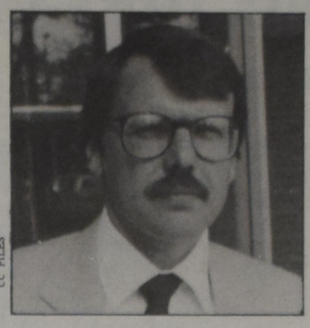
"We made no snap judgments in that initial conversaton," he continues. "I told him his position was not compatible with CRC or seminary faculty positions, that I would raise the issue with the executive committee [of the board, which would be meeting in three weeks]. I came into that [board] meeting with no recommendation. As we talked it through, we thought the best option was to withdraw the invitation."

As to why someone with Veenhof's views was hired, De Jong says that due to other faculty changes, the position came open very late in the year. "We were operating in a very compressed time frame. We had about four weeks; normally we have a year, a year and a half, to look through vitae, check references, talk with people."

### He stands for something beyond himself

Some critics have suggested that since Veenhof's course material did not include discussions about homosexuality, his views on the subject were irrelevant.

Not so, asserts De Jong. "A confessional seminary with a denominational identity makes statements by the people it has on its faculty. This is a situation in which consistency with denominational and seminary positions was judged to be very important. It's a sensitive issue. What we did was consistent with other staffing decisions in the past. Our people sign a form of subscription. This decision was not taken with a finger in the wind, but for where we stand."



CC FILES

*Dr. James De Jong*

De Jong gives examples of what he believes are comparable issues. "In the '80s — or any other time — we would not have hired someone who had publicly advocated apartheid [even though his views may not have surfaced in class]. And if somebody were to take a pretty straightforward pro-choice position on abortion, saying it's none of the church's business, this is strictly a personal matter, that would rub against statements the church has made and we undoubtedly wouldn't hire someone like that."

De Jong admits there are "so many complex issues in doctrine and morality because of the rapid change in the world. The church is often asked to make statements on those things. It tries to evaluate them in a biblically responsible manner. The church makes judgments about the relative weight of these matters, not always explicitly. Sometimes in dealing with contemporary issues the church speaks clearly, decisively, and can't on other issues."

He cites ordaining women as a "different kind of issue" from those he has mentioned. "There's a great deal of ambiguity exegetically about this."

De Jong admits that Veenhof is "somewhat perplexed about how we can take a different position than that of the GKN [Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, the CRC's 'mother church']. He has a good deal of appreciation for this faculty, but subsequently he sees the CRC using the same hermeneutic he uses to come to his conclusions.

"We see a very different thing going on hermeneutically. We have talked about this for years, and expressed ourselves in print [about our approach to Scripture]. He operates on the assumption that there is hermeneutic continuity on these issues; our faculty is convinced otherwise. Beneath [Veenhof's view of homosexuality] is a hermeneutical approach that our faculty is not comfortable with."

To those who say that how one views homosexuality is not a doctrinal matter, De Jong says, "If it's not explicitly in the confessions, it's very strongly implied. His position is at variance with ... how we interpret the seventh commandment. The *Heidelberg Catechism* explication of the seventh commandment lays down all kinds of things which have implications for sexual purity. We've always interpreted that to include homosexual relationships."

### A cordial relationship

Though he personally disagrees with Veenhof's views, De Jong deeply regrets this turn of events. "I feel very bad about it," he says. "Both he and I were very disappointed about this; we had a very cordial relationship. We were pastorally concerned about each other, about the fallout for him and for the seminary."

De Jong and Veenhof remain on friendly terms. They've had telephone conversations "three or four times" since Veenhof returned to Switzerland. They talk theology too. "He's got John Cooper's [1991] booklet *Cause for Division*, which states our hermeneutic. He says he'll read it carefully."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## Chapter & Verse

* Wayne Brouwer
Andrew Kuyvenhoven
Laura Smit
Al Wolters

# *Raging fires and refreshing fluids*

*"Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell"* (James 3:5-6).

One of our daughters went to an all day youth event some time ago. Besides mediocre food and boring "motivational" talks there was an afternoon of games and recreation. Our daughter got into the line-up for the Sumo wrestlers. Now, she's a petite little thing, but when they swallowed her body up into the foam rubber Sumo wrestler suit she looked like Fat Albert! The point of this Sumo wrestling is to topple over the other pint-sized person living inside a similar suit. Both people are so clumsy they look hysterically funny. And both are so padded that they couldn't hurt each other if they wanted to.

### Padded hearts

When I see those play-time "Sumo wrestlers" it reminds me of what the Bible says about patience and kindness. People who are patient seem to have a high capacity to absorb lots of the hurtful stuff that's always bouncing around in the daily grind of living. It's almost as if they regularly wear extra padding in order not to get quickly riled.

That doesn't necessarily make them insensitive. But it does help control the anger that rages through society. Angry people throw fists. Angry drivers cut you off and wave at you with one finger. Angry athletes smash equipment, and sometimes bodies. Angry men beat up on women. Angry women slap children. Angry nations strut military hardware. And everyone cowers in fear.

We protect ourselves as best we can from the anger of others. We develop "civilization" in order to bring the darker passion under some rational control. But our tongues seem to be "outside the loop" on that rewiring. And verbal bullets pass right through the protection of our padded hearts.

### A handful of options

While we can't make other people behave better, there is something we can do about our own stance in the Sumo wrestling of life. Someone taught me long ago that there are only five basic responses we can make to others when they direct conversation, good or ill, toward us. These five "punches" are *evaluate, instruct, support, probe* and *understand*. When we evaluate the other person's speech or actions, we set ourselves up as judge over her. When we instruct, we lift our position to that of teacher. When we express support, we approach the other person as friend. When we probe we seek further engagement and bring the person into our hearts. And when we summarize and repeat what he's said, we show him that we understand.

Now this may seem like a lot of playing games, and for some people it can be. Unfortunately, for most of us, it's a game we need to begin playing with earnestness if we would hope to improve our communication and get that tongue off the hurtful trigger.

You see, evaluate and instructional responses in conversation tend to shut down communication and throw barbs into the other person's soul. While none of us believes we ever use those unless called for, the fact of research is that typical North American conversation includes around *80 per cent* of evaluative and instructional statements!

In other words, we're constantly pricking right through the Sumo wrestlers' pudding of other people! And most of the time we don't even know it!

### The stuff of society

Yet that's what society teaches us is proper behavior. That's what runs political campaigns! That's why the Jews and Arabs need guns in the Middle East. That's why Canada is about to break up. That's why the Muslims in France are on the edge of being run out of the country.

And in our homes it's the same thing. A husband shakes an angry fist of paper at his wife and shouts, "Look at these bills!" Where do you think the money's going to come from?" But he's not asking a question. He's really saying, "Oh you stupid woman!" A moody teen yells at her parents, "Why are you always riding my case?" and the air is supercharged for a fight. Church members quibble about practices and raise their doctrinal swords to kill those who look most like themselves.

Someday the raging fires of hell will be quenched by the refreshing fluids of heaven. James hopes that it will begin in the church. And, indeed, sometimes it does. Palmer Ofuoku, a Nigerian pastor, remembers when the first missionaries came to his village. Some few became Christians, but not many, because these pale ones spoke many words of judgment (evaluation) and demand (instruction). It wasn't until another missionary came that Ofuoku began to listen and respond with faith and care. Why? Because, said Pastor Ofuoku, this man stayed next to me when I was sick (support). He asked me about my family (probing), and let me know that he genuinely cared about me (understanding). Said Palmer Ofuoku: *He built a bridge of friendship to me, and Jesus walked across!*

I wonder how many bridges like that I've built lately....

*Wayne Brouwer is senior pastor at Harderwyk Chr. Ref. Church in Holland, Mich.*

# Australian churches apologize for racism

SYDNEY, Australia (EP) — The Uniting Church in Australia joined Anglican and Roman Catholic churches in apologizing to Australia's Aboriginal people for its role in separating children from their parents, a practice common until the 1960s under the government's policy of assimilation.

No exact figures are available, but more than 100,000 Aboriginal children are thought to have been taken from their families by Australian governments. Between 1903 and 1930 more than a third of Aboriginal children were taken from their families.

The apology was made as the Uniting Church made its final report to the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families. The inquiry is looking at generations of Aborigines who were removed from their families by government authorities, and is setting up a framework to pay compensation to the victims. According to Ecumenical News International (ENI), the policy of assimilating Aborigines into white society has been discarded and is now a cause of embarrassment to all who were responsible for it.

# *Trustees remove member of study committee on gays*

**CC staff**

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — The executive committee of the Christian Reformed Church's Board of Trustees decided in a recent meeting to remove a person from the committee requested by Synod 1996 to study the church's ministry to persons who are homosexual.

The reason for the dismissal was that the man had in a letter sent last year to the study committee of Classis Grand Rapids East expressed strong criticism of the denomination's position against homosexual relationships, even if they were monogamous.

In that letter he had also revealed that, although he favors celibacy for homosexual persons, he had counselled his gay son, who admitted to not having the gift of celibacy, to try to form a committed relationship with another gay person.

It was the opinion of the Board of Trustees that since Synod 1996 wanted the study committee to do its work within the framework of the decisions of Synod 1973, such a committee should not include a member who disagreed with Synod 1973's report on homosexuals.

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Feature

# The way we celebrate Christmas turns salvation upside down

**Syrt Wolters**

On Christmas day we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ our Savior. That's certainly an event meriting enthused celebration. Finally, after centuries of waiting, God's promise is fulfilled! But if we pause and think more deeply, we realize that Christmas is only the beginning of the long road of redemptive suffering. Every step of the way, for 33 years, Jesus carried out the mandate given to him by his Father. And we follow his progress on that Via Dolerosa with tension! Will he make it? Finally Jesus reaches the lowest point of suffering on Good Friday at the cross, when he cries out; "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Yet Jesus remained obedient so he could cry his: "It is finished!"

Yes, we are relieved to know that Jesus completed his work. Praise God! So, wouldn't it be natural if the church were to celebrate Good Friday even more enthusiastically than it celebrates Christmas? But when we come to church on Good Friday, is there the same exuberance? Not by a long shot!

We do celebrate Easter rather extensively, but is it comparable to our celebration of Christmas? Again, no! And after Easter our celebrations go downhill fast. We hardly think of Ascension Day, perhaps because the world does not see an opportunity to make a dollar from it. If the world doesn't see anything in it, we don't seem to see any reason for celebration either. Some churches have services with pews half occupied.

Then comes Pentecost. Many who come to church on that day are surprised suddenly to discover that it *is* Pentecost Sunday! They had never thought of it during the week. And to think that Pentecost is the capstone of Jesus' redemptive work!

### A telling comparison

Those among us who have experienced or vaguely remember the Second World War distinctively remember D-Day: the invasion of the Allies on the beaches of Normandy. People who had been subjected to Nazi cruelties for almost six years jumped for joy when clandestine radio told them that their rescuers had landed in Normandy. But we all knew very well that this was only the beginning; a whole lot of suffering had to be endured during the next year. From that day we anxiously watched the progress of Allied forces and we rejoiced greatly when we noticed progress.

We prayed for the Allies all along the way. We were all very tense from day to day because we knew that if the Nazis were to win, even D-Day would have been in vain. The battle had to end in victory. That victory came with the Liberation. The Liberation was the capstone of the Allied attack.

Is there not a clear analogy here with Christmas? Christ came to Bethlehem to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. On Ascension Day we remember that he has restored us to our original place in Paradise: as officebearers of God, in charge of Creation. This is a tremendous mandate. Then Ascension Day is followed by Pentecost, at which time God fills us with the power of the Holy Spirit. Only in the Spirit's power are we able to perform our cultural mandate again. That's why our most jubilant and profound celebration should be on Pentecost. It is the energizing event of God's people.

Our celebration of Christmas is only lip-service if we don't progressively intensify the celebrations that follow. If you want to know how Christianity is doing in North America, look at the chronology of our celebrations. There's a lot of room for improvement.

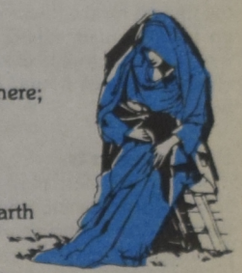
*Syrt Wolters lives in Victoria, B.C.*

## Humbled

To Bethlehem, the group pressed on
In dust and heat, since early dawn.
Mary knew her time was near
And shed a silent, tired tear.

We'll find a room, there you can rest;
Though Joseph tried his very best,
The town was full, the rooms were booked,
Only one small stable was overlooked.

Inside, some sheep lay on the ground
While scruffy chickens pecked around.
Cows chewed their cud while donkeys brayed;
In the midst of this, the infant laid.



Mary closed her eyes and sighed,
I tried, dear Jesus, you know I tried,
But your Father's plan placed us in here;
I cannot argue, I will not fear.

Time and history cannot erase
The crude simplicity of that place.
Where the greatest King to live on earth
Had the most humble, lowly birth.

As I talk on my cell while the CD's play
I'm surfing the net; time slips away
A mortgage assumed, bills to pay —
My life consumes me; there's no time to pray.

In my complex world of technological ease,
Humble me, Lord, to fall on my knees.
Through your stable birth, remind me anew
That when life's stripped down, there's only You.

**Marilyn Loenen**
**Edmonton.**

## *Though worms eat, yet...*

**for F.K.**

Christmas
and Handel's *Messiah*
are in season and here we are
invited to sink
into cushioned comfort:
Roy Thomson concert hall.

*Well-heeled* here a misfit, as you beside me
sit rigid against bone
jarring against nerve,
against the burlesque
of pain worming all out of season.

Like some hand stiffened
around the bar of some
roller coaster car screaming
along its track: so you hold
your self taut and frail as
a beggar.

as the soloist rustles to her feet
as in that glittering room
word becomes flesh
as your electric nerves
receive the eucharist
of Job's song:

Though worms eat this body,
yet, shall I see, yet
in my flesh shall I see,
God, though worms eat
yet, this body, in
my flesh shall I see.

**Agnes Kramer-Hamstra**
**London, Ont.**

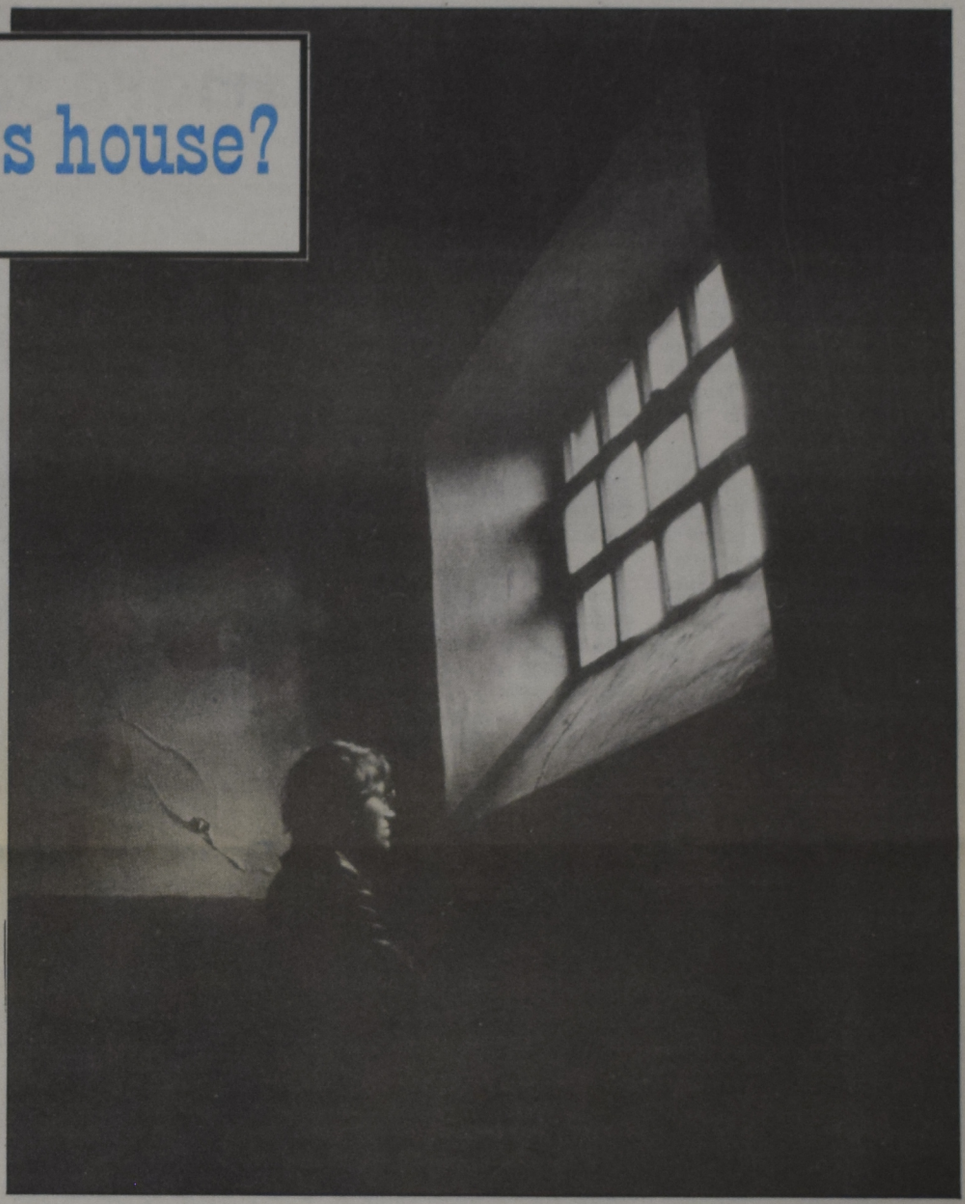
## There were shepherds in the field

*experiencing a walk through a dark field*
*a crisp autumn evening the grasses*
*crunching under my boots the sky so vast*
*but close around me making me humble*
*beneath the panorama of stars that I knew*
*God had set in place and yet he was right*
*there walking beside me in the darkness his*
*shoulder brushing mine*
*the shepherds knew*
*and perhaps were so accustomed to the nightly*
*display they didn't always feel the presence*
*of God until that night*
*when his heavenly host a great company*
*of them came as back-up for the angel*
*appearing in the glory-filled sky as he finished*
*telling the incredible news*
*that God was stepping into human flesh*
*that night in Bethlehem*
*this grand theatrical display put on only*
*for the wondering eyes of earthly shepherds*
*in rough homespun only for their eager hairy*
*ears and heads.*

**Linda Siebenga**
**Blackfalds, Alta.**

Feature

# How far is Daddy's house?



**Ron Dube**

The alarm clock rings at 5 a.m. and she rises to shower and dress. Two children sit groggy eyed at the table waiting for her to prepare breakfast, puzzled as to why they must get up when it's still dark outside. She helps them get dressed in their winter boots and snow suits. After packing diapers, toys, baby bottles and some treats she phones for a taxi.

In the apartment lobby she waits and waits and waits. Finally the cab arrives to take her to the bus station to catch an 8 o'clock bus. On the bus the children are restless. But after a few miles of answering the same question, "How far is Daddy's house, Mommy?" (they are too young to understand their father being in prison) they fall asleep. They arrive in Kingston just a bit past noon. After a washroom stop, changing the baby's diaper and doling out the quick lunch prepared last night, they all rush to catch a cab to Collin's Bay Institution for a visit which begins at 1 p.m.

> **...Why should this woman suffer such sacrifices on the day before Christmas for someone in prison?...**

A woman, a mother, a wife waits and waits and waits for the guard to let her in to visit her husband. Between the electronic doors she stands with one child in her arms and another hugging her leg crying that he is cold. But she cannot say anything for fear of jeopardizing this "privilege" the authorities have granted her family.

She finds no compassion evident in the guard at the desk, as she and her children are forced to wait between doors that blow in a cold wind every time they are opened. At least she found a spot inside this time; others are not so lucky. She hands over her identification to a guard to be scanned by a drug detecting machine while her children watch.

Eventually, she enters the visiting area to wait and wait and wait as authorities attempt to locate her husband. Finally he appears. By this time the visiting room is full. It is loud with crying babies, screaming children and everyone else trying to talk above the noise. She comforts the baby and he chases after his son who wants to run everywhere and touch everything. Every minute is savored; they know that visits will be closing early today — 2:30 p.m., to allow the prison staff to get home to be with their loved ones. Sitting across from each other at a graffiti-covered table in chairs stained with the grind and tear of time, they hold each other's hands, gaze into each other's eyes. He adoringly looks at her cradling their baby in her arms and she lovingly looks at him with their son now quietly sitting in his lap. Time has gone by too quickly, but before they part they bow their heads in prayer.

He reads Luke 2:8-20 from a small New Testament given to him at a Christian meeting inside the prison. He kisses his small family goodbye and hugs his son who is crying because he can't understand why he has to leave. Sad that they are leaving, but grateful that he has a family which loves him the way they do, he leaves the visiting room, holding on until he returns to his cell before shedding a tear.

She dresses the children again and retraces her steps home, arriving late in the evening. Exhausted, she feeds and bathes her children and explains to her son why Daddy can't be home for Christmas. She kisses their children and settles them in bed. She wraps a few presents donated by a local charity for the children to open in the morning. At the end of a long day she falls to an exhausted sleep, alone, lonely and crying on Christmas Eve.

## Why the sacrifice?

Why should this woman suffer such sacrifices on the day before Christmas for someone in prison? Someone who committed a crime which brought suffering to the community and to his family, especially his children?

> **"He gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."**

Because she loves him and forgives him she is able to make such difficult choices and keep her family together — Choices that many wives of prisoners make day after day and year after year. In a world that usually projects hate and anger towards prisoners, it is hard to comprehend how someone could love such a person.

The sacrifices exhibited by this woman provide us with a window on the Christmas story: the passion and the prejudice relived today as it was almost 2000 years ago.

Why would God suffer the sacrifice of his Son for a world which is locked in a prison of sin, a world which has brought suffering to both itself and God? Because God loves us and forgives us, "he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

That promise was kept by Mary who travelled a great distance only to experience rejection at the inn and be forced to give birth to her son in a dirty stable.

Let us give thanks this Christmas that God did not dismiss or deny our worth and value, nor view us with the same revulsion that many have chosen to project towards prisoners.

The mystery of that couple's love for each other may challenge our comprehension, just as the unfathomable love God has for us may seem beyond our ability to grasp.

*Ron Dube is a prisoner in Collin's Bay Institution, Kingston, Ont. He became a Christian while in prison and is now an ordained pastor in the Congregational Christian Churches of Canada and ministers to other inmates.*

Feature

# No more sea!

**Tymen E. Hofman**

*Read: Revelation 20:11-21:8.*
*Text: Rev. 21:2b "...And the sea was no more."*

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Being realistic today, I face the challenge of one more sermon, for my preaching ministry is over. I'm reminded of the advice once given to young ministers: "Preach every sermon as though it might be your last." I'm not sure if that was good advice or bad. But with that in mind, I've chosen a futuristic kind of text, from the prophetic revelation of Jesus Christ to John, given to show him "what must soon take place."

In John's vision, he has just seen the Judgment Day. It's past. God is the judge on the great white throne. The final judgment is the great vindication of God's honor and the full demonstration of his truth, goodness and righteousness. Note that his throne is white, the mark of true purity. It is the day of justifying his ways with his creation and his creatures; the day of the separation of the redeemed from the evil, each to their eternal reward.

**The sea stands for everything that threatens, that encroaches upon life. It alienates, it brings rebellion and strife.**

Then John sees the new heaven and earth — God's good but ruined creation in total renewal. And with it, the fullness of life breaks forth upon the redeemed. Jesus says, "Behold, I make all things new."

With this John begins to describe the new creation.

## Symbolic sea

There's one very important thing about the new creation. In John's vision, "the sea was no more."

That is revealing, for we get an idea of what will be from what will not be. Take away what will not be, and you gain insight into what will be. But what is it that is no more?

We should not conclude there will be no great waters in the new creation. That would mean no possibility of fish and all the sea creatures God made to swim in the ocean. And I believe these creatures will remain as part of the glory of creation.

Rather, in the Bible, the sea is often symbolic of that which causes separation, division and destruction. In the psalms, the rising waters and the roaring sea threaten Israel's *shalom* and bring fear into her life. The people are powerless against the floods.

So the sea stands for everything that threatens, that encroaches upon life. It alienates, it brings rebellion and strife. And finally, it brings forth death. We read that the Beast that serves the Antichrist comes out of the sea. That beast is constantly working to bring the creation into rebellion against Christ and to bring misery into the world.

## Living in hope

When you visit Urk, the Netherlands, you can't miss its striking monument with the black stone statue of the Woman of Urk. She is standing on the shore looking out to sea, her full skirt billowing in the wind. She's waiting for her husband and sons to return from months at sea. But many fishermen did not return. Their ships were swallowed up by the waves of the wild North Sea.

Surrounding the statue is a wall containing all the names of those who died at sea, and their ages, some as young as nine or 10. Engraved on the base of the statue are these words from the Revelation of John: "En de zee was niet meer" ("And the sea was no more.") That reveals that the Woman of Urk, while fearing the sea, is really living in hope. She sees the day when the sea will give up its dead, and will be no more; it will never threaten her life again.

There usually are two sides to everything, and so it is with our lives. There is so much of the good, the enjoyable and beautiful in life that if we concerned ourselves with nothing else we could be in great bliss.

In my mind's eye I can see my three sons and their families gathered at our table, enjoying a good meal. That is real life, according to the Bible. Life is enjoying a good job in a good community. Life is being in church together.

But realistically speaking, we all, every day, like the Woman of Urk, are standing on the shore looking apprehensively at the raging sea.

Our world is in perpetual unrest and turmoil. It is a world in rebellion and deeply divided. It is divided in matters of race, religion, culture, economic power. There are "haves" and "have-nots."

Being so divided we are plagued with genocidal wars, even after the horrors of the Holocaust. We seem never to learn. Think of Bosnia, Rwanda, Uganda and Liberia (to mention just a few).

## More martyrs

Christians have always been persecuted, but I read recently that more Christians have been martyred in the 20th century than in all the previous 19. Islamic fundamentalism is fighting a *jihad* against the church of Christ, all over the world. The Chinese Communists are renewing their oppression of the church.

The ugly face of terrorism continues to show itself. Just mention the Unibomber, the World Trade Center and Oklahoma City and horrible pictures come to our minds. We wonder where the next terrorist attack will demolish life. Will the plane you take this week arrive at its destination?

The ravages of famine and disease threaten the life of many nations. AIDS alone has potential to wipe out whole populations. The African continent is in complete crisis.

All of this is intensified through the violence of nature: earthquakes, hurricanes, tornados, volcanoes, fire and floods — all totally beyond human control.

## Living in fear

Closer to home, things don't get any better. Our communities are plagued with the degradation of poverty and the drug culture, with its lawlessness, violence, murder and sexual abuse, with crime that makes everyone a victim and no one safe. We barricade ourselves against invasion by the violent. In fear, people are arming themselves to the teeth.

We are also burdened by the brokenness of humanity. We struggle with strained and threatened relationships. We suffer the pain of alienation, loss and loneliness. And we live with the threat or the reality of cancer, heart problems and Alzheimer's. As we grow older we fear life in a rest home. And we must cope with death itself. And dying, which can be even worse than death.

If by reason of God's mercy we have escaped personally, we suffer with those who are the victims of the sea. And what is finally so humbling: we find ourselves so powerless against the waves that threaten to inundate us all.

## He stilled the waves

But then, the good news breaks upon us: The time is coming, Jesus says, and is not far off, in a sense it already is, when *there will be no more sea*! All and everything that haunts human life will be GONE. It will be no more!

How can that be? It's possible because Jesus came into the world to *face the sea.* He stilled its roaring violence so that we might never become its victims. And when we believe the Good News, the glory of the new creation begins to break forth upon us and the power of the sea is broken in our lives.

Each one of us carries some load of pain and sorrow. But imagine: "no more sea" — nothing to cause you grief, pain, distress or tears.

What joyous freedom! Free from guilt and grudges, from temptation; free from our diseases, handicaps and syndromes: No more cancer or MS; no more wheelchairs, no more depression; and no more crippled and broken spirits.

## Total *Shalom*

There is still great beauty and the glory of life in each of us. The Bible says we were fearfully and wonderfully made. We're like God himself, made in his image.

Visualize, then, the wonder and beauty of a healthy, growing baby — maybe your own child, or a grandchild, — full of life, promise and hope, before "the sea" has really begun to impinge on that young life. Then carry that vision of wholeness into the total life of the new humanity, completely delivered into fullness of life, with all of our potential for living with God and each other fully realized.

Then we will each have become what God intended us to be, and his Kingdom will have come. That will be total *shalom*!

Today we already live in the power of hope. The hope that senses the newness of all things.

That glorious hope fits us for living, we who continue to suffer and who will all die. In hope we begin to live life in which the lame will run again, the blind will see again, the weak will be strong again, the old will be young again and we will all sing again.

To all who believe in him, Jesus says in benediction:

*My peace I give you. I am coming soon! Keep faith! For I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

*Tymen E. Hofman is a retired Christian Reformed pastor who lives in Grand Rapids, Mich.*

Feature

# *Love* and **legalism:** Conjectures of a guilty bystander

**Michael R. Geisterfer**

Recently I was invited to a job interview with a Christian provider of residential and day programs for persons with developmental disabilities. The position they were interviewing me for was that of regional manager. It was a good job and I was rather excited about the prospect of working with a Christian organization in providing homes for developmentally disabled members of our society.

I went to the interview with only one simple question in mind: What were their guiding principles? In their literature they spoke of representing Christ to other organizations and to the different levels of government. This is a formidable task and I was curious what it meant to them. I didn't have to wait long to find out.

## Doctrine first

They handed me a few sheets of paper that outlined their organization's guiding principles. The first sheet was a list of doctrines that one had to sign as part of the employment contract. These doctrines included the infallibility of Holy Scripture, the virgin birth of Jesus, the existence of the Trinity and the resurrection of the dead. On the reverse side of the sheet was a list of morality standards that staff would have to comply with. These were listed in negative terms, as rejections, for example, of such conduct as extra-marital relationships, premarital sexual relationships, reading or viewing of pornographic material and homosexual relationships.

The latter point, they told me proudly, had gotten them into some trouble with Human Rights Commission, but they were working on posing a legal challenge that they were hopeful would result in a change of the Human Rights Code which would legitimize their capacity to discriminate against potential employees on the basis of their sexual orientation.

## A legalistic Christ?

I left the interview with a feeling of unease in the pit of my stomach and began the six-hour drive home. By the time I rolled into the driveway later that night, my unease had turned to outright sadness. Nowhere in any of the literature they had given me, or in any of our discussions, was there any talk of the developmentally handicapped persons they were ostensibly serving. Instead we talked mainly about doctrine and the nature of Christian belief.

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*"Everyone, regardless of the color of their skin, their religious creed, their sexual orientation, is a child of God. He loves each one of them as parents love their offspring."*

This is what troubles me: the Christ they are representing to the world is a Christ obsessed with religious doctrine and dogma and with the sexual affairs of others, a Christ who feels so strongly about homosexuality that he is willing to break the laws of the land in order to persecute people who engage in homosexual practise. It is ironic and more than a little sad that Christianity has been reduced to this, and that Christ has become as pretty a figure as he is depicted in this scenario.

Ironic, but not all that surprising. When Jesus walked the earth he came up against precisely the same form of narrow-minded legalism among the purveyors of Judaism: the Sadducees and the Pharisees. For them, Torah had become not a path to finding God but a complex labyrinth of laws and precepts and ordinances designed to pass judgment on others. Originally an oral tradition, Torah was meant to be a body of teachings, a set of guidelines which, if followed, would lead one to God. They degenerated over the generations to the point where they became weapons of destruction, used in some instances to legitimize the stoning of women caught in adultery.

Interestingly, Jesus' response to one such incident was the famous, "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." There is a story about one of Jesus' near-contemporaries, Rabbi Hillel, who was asked during his rabbinical training to summarize all of the law and the prophets while standing on one foot. Without batting an eye, Hillel replied: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." If this simple statement summarizes the volumes and volumes and volumes of literature that have been written about Torah, then Jesus' statement is even more profound: "Love one another as I have loved you. And love your neighbor as yourself."

## We don't love ourselves

I have often wondered what it is in the human personality that allows us to stray so quickly from this simple truth. What it is that seduces us from the path of compassion and understanding and mires us in the thicket of intolerance and legalism? I have a hunch that the answer may lie in the part of Jesus' statement about loving our neighbor as yourself. The truth is, that whether we are aware of it or not, we love our neighbor in precisely the same measure that we love ourselves. And since most of us really don't love ourselves, we don't do a very good job when it comes to our neighbor.

This problem is particularly acute in (though not unique to) the Reformed tradition where belief in our total depravity is one of the basic tenets of our faith. It might sound heretical to suggest that a basic truth about the human condition might somehow have become distorted over the centuries, but I will suggest it anyhow. While it is true that separation from the love of God is misery multiplied a hundredfold, the greater truth is that God loves each one of his children. For me it is a question of where one chooses to lay the focus of one's theology.

## Can't know God's love

At the Kanata Community Christian Reformed Church on the weekend I heard the story of a grandfather who for years had refused to partake of communion, believing himself to be unworthy of God's love. His theology had become a barrier to his experiencing the love of God that was his simply for asking. This is tragic in itself. Yet an even more devastating consequence is the effect it has on the community of believers.

If our communal spirit is based on such a low self-concept that we cannot even allow ourselves to experience God's love, how much less are we going to be able to share that love with others. The only thing that will be shared is our inner pain of non-acceptance and self-loathing, an inability to forgive ourselves, and this pain will automatically be projected outward onto the world, onto a convenient scapegoat. And we will use legalism to reinforce our flagging self-esteem, propping ourselves up on the illusion of righteousness while judging those who don't meet our exacting standards.

## Let God judge

Unless I am badly mistaken, Christ's message was one of compassion and tolerance, a message of love based on the forgiveness of sins. His challenge for us as bearers of his name is to carry this torch into the darkness of self-recrimination and doubt, and to remove the burden of self-hatred from those who have been taught that they are not worthy of God's love. Everyone, regardless of the color of their skin, their religious creed, their sexual orientation, is a child of God. He loves each one of them as parents love their offspring.

If there is judgment to be made on any of these things, let God be the one to do it. We would do well, I believe, to err on the side of caution. We would be wise to simply hush up and feed the hungry; clothe the naked, take care of the widows and orphans, send food to the starving masses in Zaire.

We would do well to simply love one another just as Christ has loved us.

*Michael R. Geisterfer is a writer and social worker living in Aylmer, Ont.*

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Agriculture

# *Christian farmers: is there a world food crisis?*

**Bert Witvoet**

GUELPH, Ont. — The annual convention of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO) drew attention to the question whether or not there is a world food crisis.

Dr. Glenn Fox of the University of Guelph admitted that "an appalling number of human beings will not consume adequate and nourishing food." But that doesn't mean that there isn't enough food in the world, he added.

### The '70s had it wrong

Fox traced the ethos of the '70s, when there was a widespread belief that a population explosion would lead to global famine. Now that we have moved 20 or 30 years beyond that era, predictions of the population outstripping the planet's ability to grow food are proving to be wrong, said Fox.

He pointed to three misunderstandings that caused the panic of the '70s. The first one was a failure to understand the dynamics of population growth in relation to development. The impact of economic development is that both death and birth rates decline. He projected that the world's population will stabilize at eight to 10 billion.

The second misundertanding had to do with the causes of price hikes. Using graphs produced by his students, Fox pointed out that in real dollars the cost of corn has gone down in the last 100 years. He suggested that the market seems to find its own solutions and keep matters fairly stable.

The final misunderstanding of the '70s concerned the production capacity of agriculture. Modern technology has vastly increased production abilities and there is still a lot of good farmland under-utilized, said Fox. He concluded that the world is not yet up against the limits of world food production.

Being at a CFFO meeting, Fox felt compelled to add a Christian perspective. Borrowing heavily from E. Calvin Beisner's *Prospects for Growth*, he talked about the anti-people, anti-freedom and anti-private property policies of various governments.

Fox's cautious optimism regarding the world food supply led one questioner to raise the point that the speaker had neglected to mention such things as ozone depletion, loss of species, deforestation and other negative effects of the way we use technology and grow food.

### Panel shows complexity

The theme of the degradation of the resource base was picked up later during a panel discussion by Henry Hengeveld, a science advisor for Environment Canada. "It's the top metre of the earth's surface that produces food, said Hengeveld. "In Brazil burning of forests depletes the soil, and in Ontario 50 per cent of the carbon in the soil is gone."

He pointed to the increase of insurance claims that have made insurance companies aware of the fact that the climate is changing and that natural catastrophies are on the increase.

Ralph Kikkert of the Farm Credit Corporation said that the major cause for hunger in the world is not a shortage of food, but poor food distribution.

Don Langford, an agent for Development Extension, said that there is a real food crisis in the world and that much of it is caused by war and conflict, high rent prices for land in developing countries and a lack of rainfall caused by deforestation. He added that politicians nor money can solve these problems, but "farmers helping farmers."

Pork producer John Moerman said that society had lost its moral compass, and each Christian should help at least one poor person.

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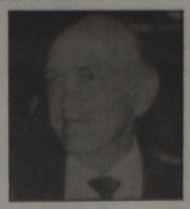


# Rural Christmas 50 years ago

**Vern Gleddie**

The joy of the Savior sent into the world transcends time and place, but I admit to some nostalgic feelings for the Christmas of 1944.

The first sign of the approach of Christmas time was assignments handed out in school and Sunday School for the annual Christmas concerts: parts to learn for plays and songs. After weeks of memorization and practice the time arrived to perform. Teachers and mothers had worked hard making costumes and coaching reluctant actors and singers. First came the school concert. The town hall was packed for the event. With some prompting from the side of the stage, the program came off without a hitch. Well, not quite. Telmar did not get to play his mandolin. He tried and tried to shake the pick out from inside his instrument, to no avail.

The church program was a few nights later. It had more music and no Santa Claus. Some kids who had previously dropped out of Sunday school and church came back for the Christmas program, because every child, whether performing or not, got a bag of candy, nuts and an orange.

### Shyness, secrets and stars

On the last afternoon of school before being let out for the holidays there was a skating party on the school rink, followed by cookies and cocoa. The skating party was almost as scary as being in the school play because it meant trying to impress a special girl without attracting the attention of others. Would I skate with her? Nope. Johnny C. did.

Then school was out and piano lessons stopped for awhile. Helping to keep the anticipation of Christmas alive was the box of chocolate-covered mint wafers my piano teacher had given me. I kept it in my room between the two window panes and ate one in bed every night just after brushing my teeth.

At Christmas I was always fascinated by the stars. Was the brightest one the star that led the wisemen to the Christ Child? I loved to be the one to deliver parcels by sleigh in the early darkness of Christmas Eve to the various families on the farm. I felt a little like a wiseman.

### A grand family affair

On Christmas Eve, our family was with my father's parents. There we enjoyed a big meal and, as usual, at the end, my grandfather wanted to feel my little finger so he could tell if I was full or not. We exchanged gifts, but this time there was a special surprise. It was during World War II, and on our farm, as on many others, there were German prisoners of war helping to alleviate a labor shortage. They had secretly made, with hand tools, doll beds for my sisters and trucks and wheelbarrows for the boys.

Christmas Day was the most exciting of all. We drove the seven miles to my grandmother's farm where her son and most of her seven daughters and their families had gathered for the day. In Grandma's house the wood stove was fired up, cooking turkey and the trimmings. All the women stayed in the kitchen to visit and the men converged in the dining room. To save heat the sitting room was locked off, but in that room was the Christmas tree, decorated with real candles. They would be lit after dark for a carol sing.

The boys all went out to play hockey after spending half the afternoon cleaning off the stock pond.

Grandma's house had no plumbing. There was only the outhouse. One handy thing about it was that when we were skating we didn't have to take our skates off to go to the bathroom.

We gorged ourselves on dinner. Turkey was something we had only once or twice a year. Grandma and her daughters were excellent cooks.

### Modest gifts still remembered

When we exchanged gifts later, every child received something from every family. Presents were modest. I remember receiving an exotically scented bar of soap that I kept in my bottom dresser drawer to remind me of Christmases past. There was a prized cap gun which I never fired. When we went outside to play, Grandma's pet ram charged me and I smashed the gun on his horns. My cousin Mickey gave me a clip-on tie. And there were games and puzzles and candy.

As good as these memories are, I sometimes wish there would have been more deliberate tradition established, emphasizing the story and meaning of Christmas. We all valued the true meaning to some degree or another, but, even as today, the festivities tended to supersede the occasion.

However, it may have been that we didn't need the obvious to be driven home. We all knew this was a special celebration of the coming of the Savior. We were taught that year-round. And there was no other celebration at any other time of the year to rival this one.

Fifty years ago one's extended family usually lived close by. Food was mostly home-grown. Fun was homemade. We enjoyed each other's company and we celebrated together, frozen noses, toes and outhouses notwithstanding.

*Vern Gleddie is a sheep rancher near Edmonton. He is active in Earthkeeping, the association of Christian Farmers in Alberta.*

Agriculture

# The Dutch experiment with 'the milking robot'

A. Kuipers

The introduction of the milking machine was a major step forward in dairy cattle husbandry. It was the first step in mechanizing and automating of the milking process. Much labor was saved and the number of cows and production per cow increased. However, the milking of dairy cows still requires a lot of the farmer's time. On average, milking takes four hours a day.

The next step in the milking process is "automatic milking." Automatic milking of dairy cows by robots will have a large impact on farm management, the dairy farmer and his or her family, and on dairy cows.

## Step into the box, please

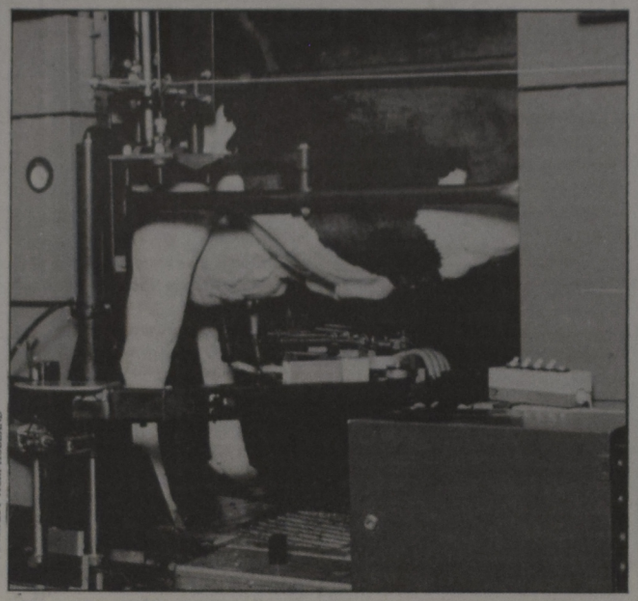
In automatic milking systems cows are not milked in the conventional milking parlors, but in so-called milking boxes. In milking boxes the cows can feed on concentrates, and if they wish to be milked they visit the milking box where the automatic system decides whether they should be milked or not.

In the construction of automatic milking systems the development of effective systems to attach the teat cups to the udder has played a central role. In attaching the teat cups a robot arm is used to position the teat cups. The teat cups are attached to the cow from behind or from the side via the different automatic systems.

The robot arm attaches the teat cups one by one, or the teat cups are positioned below the udder and attached simultaneously. Before the teat cups are attached, the placement of the teats has to be located. There is much variation among dairy cows in udder shapes and teat placements, which complicates correct attachment of the teat cups.

In addition, the teat placement of a specific cow is dependent on the amount of milk in the udder, which varies at each milking because different milking intervals occur in automatic milking. The various systems restrict the cows in their movements in the milking boxes, which facilitates the attachment to the teats.

The development of automatic milking systems has now progressed so far that systems are now being marketed. In the Netherlands, two types of robot milking systems are on the market. Both consist of milking boxes which cows have to visit.



COURTESY AGRI-HOLLAND

*"The milking robot" in action.*

One type has a robot arm, which can handle one to three boxes, the other type has a robot for each milking box.

## Computer knows her measurements

One of these robot milkers is undergoing trials at the "Waiboerhoeve" experimental farm in Lelystad, where another system is installed which is not yet available on the market.

The attachment of teat cups in this last system is based on calculations of teat distances, combined with a vision system. The measurement of the distances between the cow's teats are stored in the computer.

Distances between the teat cups are determined at each milking on the basis of the coordinates of the cow's teats and the milking interval. The cups are attached simultaneously.

The other system on the experimental farm consists of two milking boxes. When the robot arm is positioned below the udder, an ultrasonic sensor searches for the right front teat. This teat is used as a reference teat in regard to the others.

Another ultrasonic sensor determines the distances to the other teats. After these distances have been determined, the teat cups are attached one by one.

On practical farms about 30 robotic units are now operational. Per milking box, about 35 to 50 cows can be milked daily when milking is done on a 24-hour basis.

The speed and accuracy of the robot arm in finding teats form the basis of the proper functioning of the milking robot. Both aspects have to be improved further. And good udder shape and correct teat placement are very important characteristics in robot milking.

Current experience is that at least 10 per cent of cow udders are not suited for automatic milking. This means that in robot milking, "good udders" will become even more important than they are at present. The reliability of the system should be improved, as well, in order to guarantee that the presence of the dairy farmer will not be needed during robotic milking.

## Cleanliness and mastitis detection

For automatic milking the cows should have clean udders. So far, methods enabling the milking robot to detect very dirty udders are not available. For the time being, the milker's eye still is indispensable for detecting very dirty udders. For this reason a high degree of overall hygiene in the loose housing system is of importance. In addition, preparation boxes and teat cleaning in advance can be of assistance.

The presence of the dairy farmer as "milk watch" could be eliminated by means of an extensive management program with sensors which takes over the checking tasks of the dairy farmer.

Cows with mastitis and their milk should be separated from the system. The measurement of the conductivity of the milk is used for the detection of mastitis. The separation of cows with mastitis from the system asks for further examination. Furthermore, it is possible to implement different sensors within the system which gives information on the cow's health and fertility status.

## 'Be a good cow'

The behavior of the cows within the milking box is very important in automatic milking. The cows must feel at ease in the system. This will contribute positively to their voluntary entering of the system. Moreover, quiet cows will facilitate attachment of the teat cups by the milking robot. For this reason, the automatic milking system should be adjusted to the dairy cow's wishes. More knowledge of the cow's behavior in a fully automated stable is important.

Research results show that the number of cows entering the milking robot differs per unit of time. At the 'Waiboerhoeve' a few "troublesome" cows needed regular assistance in entering the system. It is obvious that cows need to understand the system and that the system must react in the same way all the time. Cows without a "conventional milking history" seem to adapt faster to a milking robot.

## More milk, any one?

In principle, the milking robot can be used nearly 24 hours a day. Milking frequency can be increased as well. Milking frequency, to a large extent, determines the capacity of the milking robot. An increase in frequency has a significant influence on the dairy cow.

From research trials it is known that an increase in milking frequency from two to three times results in a milk production increase of 10 to 15 per cent. The increase in milk production is coupled with lower contents.

From the point of view of well-being, an increase in milking frequency from two to three means an improvement for the high-yielding cows, in particular. It is known that when cows are milked twice a day, high-yielding animals can hardly lie down some hours before milking. Milking frequencies higher than four should be avoided, however, because this will result in a higher incidence of mastitis and teat damage. The automatic milking system should regulate the milking frequency per cow in order to achieve optimal results.

## Goodbye sun

Automatic milking will have a major influence on the grassland system applied at the dairy farm. Automatic milking functions optimally if the cows are kept in the neighborhood of the milking boxes. As a result, the cows should be kept indoors throughout the year to achieve this goal. In this way the use of the milking robot is most efficient and high yielding cows can be milked more often.

However, in Western Europe the cows are usually grazed in summertime. Keeping the cows indoors throughout the year implies a change in the overall management system.

From an economic point of view, the grazing of cows should be preferred to indoor feeding. For this reason, automatic milking in combination with limited grazing has to be studied.

The implementation of the milking robot at dairy farms will to a large extent be dependent on economic factors. An automatic milking system provisionally requires a substantial capital investment. Therefore the decision whether an automatic milking system will be bought or not will be taken when the old milking parlor has to be replaced or renovated.

The most important factors influencing the profitability of the milking robot are an increased milk yield, change in grassland management and feeding strategy, and investment in a conventional milking parlor as an alternative for the milking robot.

## Who will use these machines?

It is expected that especially large family farms where one person is available for milking, and very large dairy farms which want to reduce the amount of labor, will be interested in automatic milking systems.

To large family farms the lightening of physical work and the wish to be less tied down to the dairy farm will be of significant importance.

*Dr. A. Kuipers is director of the Research Station for Cattle, Sheep and Horse Husbandry in Lelystad. Reprinted from Agri-Holland, 1-1996.*

# Classifieds

## Classified Rates

**(Revised February 1, 1995)**

| | |
|---|---|
| Births | $25.00 |
| Marriages & Engagements | $40.00 |
| Anniversaries | $45.00 |
| 2-column anniversaries | $90.00 |
| Obituaries | $45.00 |
| Notes of thanks | $35.00 |
| Birthdays | $40.00 |

All other one-column classified advertisements: $15.00 per column inch. NOTE: Minimum fee is $15.00. Letter under file number $35.00 extra. Photos: $25.00 additional charge.

**Note:** All rates shown above are GST inclusive

**ATTENTION!**

a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format.,

b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is *not* acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.

c) Photographs sent by fax *are not* acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.

d) *Christian Courier* will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.

e) The rate shown above for classifieds covers any length up to five column inches. *Christian Courier* reserves the right to charge for additional column inches at the rate of $15.00 per column inch (GST incl.).

**NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS**

We offer a one-year subscription for only $25.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the *Christian Courier* and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose $25.00 and the couple's correct address.

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**Fax: (905) 682-8313**

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## Marriages

**OTT/VANDEKAMP:**

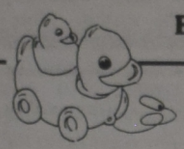
"Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4-7).

KAREN OTT
and
DOUGLAS VANDEKAMP

daughter of William and Atie Ott and son of Hendrik and Therese Vande-Kamp rejoice that they were able to celebrate their wedding day with family and friends on Aug. 24, 1996, Waterloo, Ont.

Address: 319-6040 Iona Drive, Vancouver, BC V6T 2E8
Internet: jott@netinfo.ubc.ca
(corrected version)

## Births



**ABMA/VAN EEK:**

Mike and Shirlene, along with Annalise and Aaron, praise God for the gift of life as we joyfully announce the birth of

LYDIA CHRISTINE

born Nov. 27, 1996, in Bowmanville, Ont. Proud grandparents for the 20th time are Fred and Alice Abma of Strathroy, Ont., and for the 11th time are Arie and Ellen Van Eek of Waterdown, Ont. Yet another "oer Beppe sizzer" for Jannetje Vander-Wal-Osinga of Friesland, the Neth.

## Christmas Greetings

We wish all our relatives, friends and acquaintances a joyous and blessed Christmas and also a happy New Year.
George and Alice Pasma
263 Clark Rd.
London, ON N5W 5E7

## Personal

**Two Christian men** finding it difficult to meet ladies for friendship. One of us is late forties, white Canadian, the other late fifties, Guianese (east Indian). Toronto, Richmond Hill and/or a little north. **Call (416) 376-9816 (voice mail)**

ONE TO ANOTHER

Christian companion magazine. Hundreds of readers Canada-wide. Single issue $5. Write to:
**#302, 1502-2nd Ave. S.**
**Lethbridge, AB T1J 4A2**

## Birthday

**JOLDERSMA:**

*Congratulations to Mrs. Geertrui Joldersma (nee Beldman) on the occasion of her 75th birthday!*

Holten, Overijssel — Calgary Alta.
1922 — January 4 — 1997

Happy 75th birthday to our dear mom and Oma
GEERTRUI (TRUDY) JOLDERSMA
(nee BELDMAN)
With love and best wishes from your children and grandchildren.
Martin Joldersma — Dutton, Ont.
Anne, Emily, Charlotte
Minnie Joldersma — Calgary, Alta.
Willem
Clarence & Grace Joldersma — Grand Rapids, Mich.
John, Nicholas
Trudy & Bill Joosse — Sarnia, Ont.
Laura, Reuben
Correspondence address: Mrs. Trudy Joldersma, 2835 26A St. S.W., Calgary, AB T3E 2C8

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available, 936 sq.ft. to 1235 sq.ft. Fully wheelchair accessible, sprinkler system, central air, security throughout building. Dutch and English spoken. For more info. call **(519) 482-9454 or (519) 482-7862.**

**APARTMENTS: Redeemer College** has **2- and 4-bedroom, furnished apartments available.** Can be rented daily, weekly or monthly at reasonable rates. No lease required. Please call **(905) 648-2131, ext. 260 or 290.**

**Three-bedroom bungalow** with detached garage, Limeridge Rd. W., **Hamilton, Ont.** Four appliances, no beds, $700/mo., plus utilities, first and last months' rent. Reference. **(905) 772-3272.**

## Anniversaries

1956 December 28 1996

With thankfulness to God, we hope to celebrate the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents

**ALBERT and FREDA SNIPPE**
**(nee BAKER)**

Thank you Mom and Dad for the love you always show to us and especially to each other. We wish you God's blessings. We love you and congratulate you with our best wishes.
John & Kathy — Allendale, Mich.
Aaron, Andy, Nathan
Sylvia & John — Picture Butte, Alta.
Kim, Andrea, Denise, Peter
Diana & Jamie — Owen Sound, Ont.
Scott, Shawna
Rob — Toronto, Ont.
Deb & Rob — Alliston, Ont.
Family and friends are invited to celebrate with us by coming to an open house on Friday, Dec. 27, 1996, from 6-9:30 p.m. at the Georgetown Chr. Ref. Church, Trafalgar Rd., Georgetown, Ont.
Best wishes only please.
Home address:
R.R. #1, Limehouse, ON L0P 1H0

## Obituaries

Jan. 18, 1956 - Nov. 15, 1996
**MARILYN HOUWER**
**(nee BLYLEVEN)**

entered into the arms of her Lord and Savior on Friday, Nov. 15, 1996. Loved wife of Clarence and loving mother of Chris, Maurice, Adrian, Leonard, and Allen. Loved daughter of Len and Diny Blyleven and daughter-in-law of Albert and Betty Houwer.
Dear sister of:
Richard & Janet Blyleven
Leah & Rex Wamsteeker
Nancy & Ken Zantingh
Wanda & Steve Calverda
Helen & Pete Tiersma
William & Valene Blyleven
Loving granddaughter of Marie Blyleven.
Dear sister-in-law of:
Jerry & Barb Houwer
Ed & Marg Houwer
Aileen & Jake Dekkers
Sylvia & Gord Veldstra
Joanne & Wayne De Boer
Dear aunt of many nieces and nephews.
Predeceased by her nephew Ken Houwer.
"If we suffer we also reign with Him" (2 Tim.2:12).
"And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).
Correspondence address:
Clarence Houwer, Hwy. 3, Cayuga, ON N0A 1E0

## Obituaries

Hazerswoude — Brampton
Feb. 9, 1912 - Nov. 29, 1996

"I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth... in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes — I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19: 25-27).

The Lord took home to eternal glory
**JACOB KOETSIER**
Beloved father of:
Jack & Joanne Koetsier — Listowel, Ont.
Keith & Jean Koetsier — Ethel, Ont.
John & Janet Koetsier — Clinton, Ont.
Rikki & Greg Eldridge — Stratford, Ont.
Murray & Pat Koetsier — Harriston, Ont.
20 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. Predeceased by his daughter, Hendrika, 1944, and his wife, Janet Koetsier (Matze) on Jan. 16, 1994.
Funeral services were held at the Listowel Bethel Chr. Ref. Church, on Dec. 2, 1996.
Jacob's Christian witness and influence will always be remembered.

## Job Opportunities

**LACOMBE, Alta.: Central Alberta Chr. High School** anticipates hiring another **full-time teacher** for 1997/98. This position is required as a result of growth in our Grades 10-12 school. Consider joining our caring, encouraging society, who together with an excellent staff, work to provide an education rooted in the Reformed tradition to a great group of 100+ high school students. We encourage those with experience and/or expertise in arts and/or business education to apply. However, we will consider all applicants who are willing and able to teach a variety of core subjects. Applicants should preferably be graduates of a Christian college and/or having teaching experience in a Christian high school. Eligibility for an Alberta Teaching Certificate is required. Please send resumes to:

**Jack Vanden Pol, Principal**
**Central Alberta Chr. High School**
**22 Eagle Rd.**
**Lacombe, AB T4L 1G7**
**Phone: (403) 782-4535**
**Fax: (403) 782-5425**

## Caregiving Needed

**Host family required** for wheelchair-bound mom and healthy four-month-old baby (longterm). Respite and support services will be available. Caregiver will be financially compensated. If interested, please call **Rehoboth Home, Springfield, Ont., (519) 765-4207**, for more information.

# Classifieds

**Job Opportunities** | **Job Opportunities** | **Job Opportunities**

## DORDT COLLEGE

**FACULTY POSITIONS**

Dynamic curriculum development and a record student enrollment result in the need for additional Christian academicians for openings beginning August 1997 in the following areas:

**American History:**
Introductory and upper level courses
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management and marketing or other areas
**Communication:**
Introductory and mass communication courses
**Education/Psychology:**
special education courses and developmental psychology
**Health, Physical Education, Recreation:**
exercise science, health, coaching theory, coaching women's sports
**Philosophy:**
Introductory and upper level courses
Psychology: Introductory and upper level courses in the field of applied social/cognitive psychology
**Physics:**
Introductory and upper level courses, contribution to general education and another discipline.
**Theology (two positions):**
general education courses in Biblical theology and philosophy, upper level courses in Biblical studies, church ministries, missions, and Greek.

Qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and curriculum vitae to **Dr. Rockne McCarthy; Dordt College; 498 4th Ave. NE; Sioux Center, IA 51250; facsimile: 712-722-4496; e-mail: vpaa@dordt.edu**

*Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution and encourages the nominations and candidacies of women and minorities.*

## Miscellaneous

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REDEEMER COLLEGE

## Senior Director, Administration & Finance

Reporting to the President, the incumbent is the Chief Financial Officer who plans, directs and controls the overall financial systems, policies and accounting practices of the College. Qualified individuals are those who wish to join a team that shares a common commitment to the mission and vision of Redeemer College, have a minimum of five years senior financial and administrative management experience and possess a recognized, professional accounting designation.

Interested and qualified individuals are encouraged to direct their inquiries and/or applications, references and resumes to the Human Resources Director. Application deadline: Jan. 6, 1997, or until a suitable candidate is appointed.

**A Christian University College**
**777 Hwy. 53 E, Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4**
**Phone: (905) 648-2131; Fax: (905) 648-2134;**
**e-mail: jvgeest@redeemer.on.ca**

## Administrative Assistant
**(Back to God Hour/Faith 20)**

The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) has a full-time opening for an **administrative assistant** in the Burlington office, CRCNA-Canada. The qualified individual must have demonstrated ability to handle administrative functions while possessing knowledge and experience in data processing. The primary responsibility is to provide administrative support to BTGH/Faith 20 ministry - Canada. The duties include processing of BTGH mail, response and follow-up of Faith 20 calls and other administrative functions in support of the ministry.

College diploma with professional experience in an office environment preferred; interpersonal, written, and verbal communication skills are essential.

For consideration, submit a copy of your resume or application by **December 27, 1996**, to:

**Director of Personnel**
**Christian Reformed Church in North America**
**P.O. Box 5070**
**3475 Mainway, Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8**
**(905) 336-2920/Fax (905) 336-8344**

## VICE-PRINCIPAL NEEDED

**Lacombe Chr. School**, located in central Alberta, and serving a student body of 375 students, requires a Vice-Principal for the 1997-98 school year. Duties will include both teaching and administrative duties. Candidates must qualify for Alberta teacher certification. Please send inquiries and/or resumes to: **John Piers, Principal, Lacombe Chr. School, 5206 - 58 Street, Lacombe, AB T4L 1G9.**

**Phone: (403) 782-6531 or Fax: (403) 782-5760.**
Deadline for applications is **January 15, 1997.**

## SEEKING A PASTOR

**Horizon Community Church**, a new CRC ministry of 100 families, is seeking a pastor. The church is located in the thriving suburban community of Highlands Ranch, a part of the **Denver Metropolitan area**. Key to the church's program is Bible-based dynamic preaching, enthusiastic worship, and sharing of the gospel in active outreach to a suburban community. Essential to the church's development is continued facilitation of the merging of two congregations and leadership for staff ministry. Please send inquiries and/or resumes to the **Search Committee, Horizon Community Church, 7140 S. Colorado Blvd., Littleton, CO 80122.**

**Thunder Bay Christian School**
seeks
## PRINCIPAL—ADMINISTRATOR
to begin **August 1997**

The school is SK-9, with 9 full-time staff, and 6 part-time.
TBCS was founded in 1962 and by the grace of God has been blessed with continued growth.
Present enrollment is 268.
This school adheres to the Reformed Creedal Standards.
Compensation is based on O.A.C.S. administrator's grid.
Picturesque Thunder Bay is situated along Lake Superior, serving a community of approximately 140,000, in the geographical centre of Canada.
Deadline for applications is **January 15, 1997.**
For further information contact,
**Edward Breukelman, phone/fax (807) 475-6979** or send application to:
**Edward Breukelman**
**Search Committee**
**c/o Thunder Bay Christian School**
**R.R. #2, Arthur St. W., Thunder Bay, ON P7C 4V1**

*Calgary Christian School*
seeks a
**SECONDARY PRINCIPAL**

**Calgary Christian School** (CCS) is a well-established, inter-denominational school with 635 students in grades K-12.

A **Secondary Principal** is required to direct and oversee the operations of the secondary campus with a staff of 20 and approximately 225 students in grades 8-12.

The Principal must be able to articulate a sound vision of Christian education and be committed to working as a member of an administrative team.

CCS seeks a principal with training and experience in Christian educational leadership and excellent communication and interpersonal skills. The successful candidate must be qualified for Alberta Teaching Certification.

Please send resume, a statement of your vision of Christian education and leadership, and references to:

**Mr. J. Lindemulder, Chairperson of the Board**
**Calgary Christian School, 2839-49 Street S.W.**
**Calgary, AB T3E 3X9**
**Phone: (403) 242-2896**
**Fax: (403) 242-6682**

## Classifieds/Events

# Calendar of Events

**Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.**

**Dec. 22** "A Festival of nine Lessons and Carols," featuring the Mississauga Choral Society (Chrys A. Bentley, director), at 4:30 p.m., St. Dominic's Church, Cawthra & Atwater, **Mississauga**, Ont. Free-will offering. Info.: (905)278-7059.

**Dec. 27** "The Ambassadors" present their annual "Alleluia Concert," with Laura Pin (piano) and Michael Pin (clarinet). Includes audience participation. At 8 p.m., First CRC, Charlton & Hess, **Hamilton,** Ont. Admission $6 at the door. Info.: (905) 389-2104.

**Jan. 3-4** New Year's concerts by organists Andre Knevel and Willem van Suydam. Audience participation! Both events at 8 p.m. **Jan. 3:** Chalmers United Church, **Woodstock,** Ont.; **Jan. 4:** Central Presb. Church, **Hamilton,** Ont.

**Jan. 26** Dutch worship service led by Rev. Ralph Koops, 3 p.m., CRC, **Ancaster**, Ont.

**Feb. 4** The 1997 annual "Church & the Law Seminar," hosted by the Orangeville law firm of Wardlaw, Mullin, Carter & Thwaites,in conjunction with the Can. Council of Christian charities. From 8:45 a.m. through 3:45 p.m., in Toronto at the Queensway Cathedral, 1536 The Queensway, **Etobicoke,** Ont. Guest speakers include Prof. M.H. Ogilvie (Carleton University) and lawyer George Grange (Washington, D.C.). The seminar is designed for pastors, church leaders and Christian charities to provide information on current legal issues. Pre-register by Jan. 28, 1997, at $5 per person, by contacting the CCCC at (519) 669-5137 or fax (519) 669-3291.

# FROM COAST TO COAST

## ENGLISH RADIO:

### BRITISH COLUMBIA

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| DUNCAN-CKAY | 10am | 1500 |
| Burns Lake-CFLD | 9:15am | 1400 |
| Kitimat-CKTK | 8:30am | 1230 |
| Osoyoos-CJOR | 8:00 am | 1490 |
| Penticton-CKOR | 8:00 am | 800 |
| Port Alberni-CJAV | 7:00 pm | 1240 |
| Prince George-CIRX | 7:00am | 94.3 |
| Princeton- CHOR | 8:00 am | 1400 |
| Smithers-CFBV | 9:15am | 1230 |
| Summerland-CHOR | 8:00 am | 1450 |
| Vernon-CJIB | 9:30pm | 940 |

### QUEBEC

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Montreal-CIQC | 7:30am | 600 |

### ALBERTA

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Brooks-CIBQ | 8:00am | 1340 |
| Edson-CJYR | 10:00am | 970 |
| Ft. McMurray-CJOK | 8:30 am | 1230 |
| High River-CHRB | 6:30 pm | 1280 |
| St. Albert-CHMG | 8:00 am | 104.9 |
| Edmonton-CKER | 11:00pm | 1480 |

### SASKATCHEWAN

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Estevan-CJSL | 8:00am | 1280 |
| Weyburn-CFSL | 8:00am | 1190 |

### MANITOBA

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Altona-CFAM | 9:30am | 950 |
| Steinbach-CHSM | 9:30am | 1250 |
| Winnipeg-CKJS | 9:15am | 810 |

### ONTARIO

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Atikokan-CFAK | 9:30am | 1240 |
| Chatham-CFCO | 6:30am | 630 |
| Fort Frances -CFOB | 9:30 am | 640 |
| Guelph-CJOY | 8:30am | 1460 |
| Hamilton-CHAM | 7:30am | 820 |
| Kapuskasing-CKAP | 9:00am | 580 |
| Kingston-WLKC | 7:30 a.m | 100.7 |
| Newmarket-CKDX | 9:30am | 88.5 |
| Oshawa-CKAR | 8:00am | 1350 |
| Owen Sound-CFOS | 10:30am | 560 |
| Pembroke-CHVR | 10:00am | 96.7 |
| St.Catharines-CKTB | 7:30pm | 610 |
| Sarnia-CHOK | 7:30am | 1070 |
| Stratford-CJCS | 8:45am | 1240 |
| Windsor--CKLW | 8:30am | 580 |
| Wingham-CKNX | 10:30am | 920 |
| Woodstock-CKDK (fm) | 8:00am | 102.3 |

### NEW BRUNSWICK

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Saint John-CHSJ | 9:30am | 700 |

### PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Charlottetown-CFCY | 7:00am. | 630 |

### NOVA SCOTIA

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Digby-CKDY | 6:00am | 1420 |
| Kentville-CKEN | 8:30am | 1490 |
| Middleton-CKAD | 8:30am | 1350 |
| New Glasgow-CKEC | 7:30am | 1320 |
| Sydney-CJCB | 8:00am | 1270 |
| Weymouth-CKDY | 8:30am | 103.1 |
| Windsor-CFAB | 8:30am | 1450 |

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(every Saturday)

| | |
|---|---|
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| Alberta | 8:00 & 11:00pm |
| Sask. & Manitoba | 6:00 & 9:00pm |
| Ontario & Quebec | 7:00 & 10:00pm |
| Nfld., N.B., N.S. & P.E.I. | 8:00 & 11:00pm |

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## Job Opportunities

**Christian Stewardship Services** is seeking a

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**Requirements:** proficient in Word for Windows 95, typing skills (at least 35-40 wpm), office experience an asset.
Please send resume to **#210-455 Spadina Ave., Toronto, ON M5S 2G8, or fax to (416) 977-4611. If you have any questions, feel free to call CSS at (416) 598-2181.**

**Langley Christian Schools**
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## Events

FOURTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
for
WOMEN IN THE CRC

GREAT GIFT IDEA

**Special pre-registration price** for the Fourth Annual Conference for Women in the CRC will be **$75.00** (includes meals and T-shirt). Conference theme: "Celebrating our Wholeness in Christ." **Keynote speaker: Cele Mereness** of Friendship Ministries, Grand Rapids, Mich.
**Dates: April 19-20, 1997. Location: Strathroy, Ont.**
For information contact:
**Mary Van Dyk-Ennis**
**356 Robert St., Strathroy, ON N7G 3M1**
**Phone: (519) 245-2529**
**E-mail: mennis@ican.net**
*(note: corrected e-mail address)*

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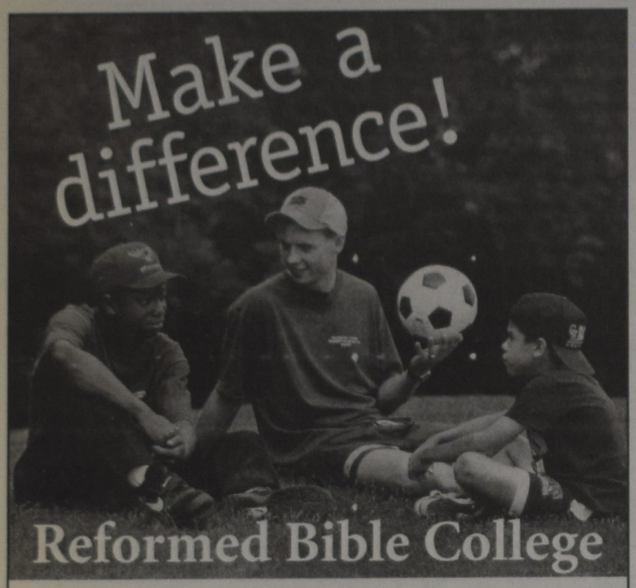
## Classifieds

### Miscellaneous

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### Church News

**Christian Reformed Church**
**New address:**

— **Rev. Nicholaas Cornelisse,** 3782 Russell Rd., Gloucester, ON K2G 3N2; Ph. res. (613) 737-7698, office and fax (613) 737-4063.

— **Rev. William Veenstra,** 20886 Alpine Ave., Maple Ridge, BC V4R 2M3; Ph. res. (604) 467-8967, office (604) 465-9416, fax (604) 465-5987.

**Attention: All Churches**
**Please inform us of important changes. Items under "Church News" will be included free of charge.**

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**Calling all former Richmond Christian School and Seacliff Christian School students, parents, teachers and supporters.....**

In the spring of 1997 the **Richmond (B.C.) Christian School** is planning to celebrate **40 years of God's faithfulness to his people**. A number of events are planned surrounding this anniversary which will make for a very special time. We want to share this celebration with past students, parents, teachers and supporters from both schools. Information is being gathered to form an alumni and a mailing list of friends and supporters. If you would like to have your name included on the mailing list and/or qualify as alumni please call our school office at **(604) 272-5720.**

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## *Support Reformed Faith Witness (RFW)*

***The undersigned, members of RFW's Board of Directors, urge all readers of Christian Courier to consider making a financial gift before December 31, 1996. Reformed Faith Witness, the new publisher of Christian Courier, is a newly formed charitable organization which just received tax exempt status and its own registration number from Revenue Canada. (See story in CC, Dec. 6, 1996). Your help will give us a real shot in the arm! Send your cheque and coupon below, and we will issue an official receipt.***

**Gary Van Eyk, Pres.**
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**Sylvan Gerritsma**
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News

# Independent schools critique Ontario education policy

**Nelly Westerhoff**

TORONTO — It was an intriguing coincidence that a forum which would discuss "responsible choice in education" occurred only a day after the Supreme Court announced its decision to assign all responsibility for independent school funding to the provincial governments.

On Nov. 26, 1996, some 100 people gathered at Queen's Park to hear five speakers raise an awareness of what they believe is the Ontario government's irresponsibility in denying parents the right to choose their children's education system.

The event was organized by the Centre for Renewal in Public Policy, an Ottawa think tank which has organized various public forums at which other concerns about public policy have been addressed.

David Brown, partner in a Toronto law firm and knowledgable about constitutional law, mounted a strong defence of parents' right to choose their children's education. He called it a "basic right that should not be subordinated to the choices of bureaucrats and teacher's unions which have become so politicized and which reflect an almost pathological aversion to religion in the schools."

If, Brown noted, "innocence is to learn from experience, it is curious to find that the dogma being imposed on children in the classroom is younger than they are." Politicians should focus on policies that both foster parental involvement in their children's education and ensure the survival of democracy by preserving in the individual "an inner citadel of the soul."

## Diverse participants united

Mark Holmes, professor emeritus at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, discussed how to structure this educational choice. He, too, encouraged parental involvement, as well as the development of a set of clearly defined options within a sound administrative framework.

Concurring with the previous speakers, Stephen Lawton, also from OISE, discussed the economic impact of parental choice by suggesting, among other formulas, a system of tax credits or tax deductions similar to those now in place for university students; or a form of educational endowment whereby parents could draw on a limited amount of money set aside for them by the government, with which they could buy education for their children. Enhanced choice would increase responsibility in spending, Lawton said.

The religious discrimination inherent in the Ontario educational system was addressed by Steven Shulman, who spoke for the Ontario Jewish Association for Equity in Education, a subcommittee of the Canadian Jewish Congress, and by Adrian Guldemond, executive director of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools.

The diverse participants were united in their conviction of the need for a profound and fundamental restructuring of the Ontario education system.

The conference material will be compiled into a booklet. Because the speeches covered all the aspects of educational choice, Adrian Guldemond believes "the booklet will be a very good resource for politicians, educators, and parents who are upset about the current mess in the system."

CC FILES

*These Native children's parents had no choice over which schools they could attend.*

# *Canadians divided on Native self-government*

**Alan Doerksen (with files from the *Globe and Mail*)**

TORONTO — Canadians have mixed feelings about aboriginal self-government, according to a poll released this month by Indian Affairs.

Only 40 per cent of people surveyed believe that Native self-government will improve living conditions on reserves, shows the poll, which was conducted by Toronto-based Insight Canada. Twenty per cent of those surveyed said self-government will worsen economic and societal conditions and 31 per cent said it will bring little change.

The survey of 1,200 adults from across Canada, which was conducted last August, shows that most of those who believe Native self-government will bring improvement live in B.C., Ontario and the Maritimes. People in Quebec and the Prairies tend to believe life on reserves will worsen.

Francophones (36 per cent) are more likely than anglophones (31 per cent) to believe self-government will make things worse. People with more education tend to believe it will make things better, while those with less education believe it will make things worse.

Most of those surveyed (58 per cent) are not convinced that adequate measures are in place to ensure that money received by Natives is responsibly managed. Only 25 per cent believed adequate measures are in place.


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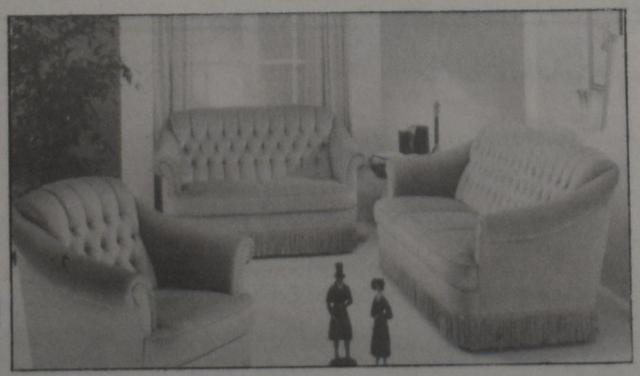

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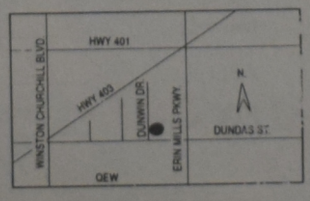


Mississauga, Dundas St. — 2 Blocks W. of Erin Mills Parkway (905) 828-9511


# First Nations Bank to open

**Alan Doerksen (with files from the *Globe and Mail*)**

TORONTO — Canada's first aboriginal bank will open early next year in Saskatoon, using the Toronto Dominion Bank's branch system to provide services to both Native and non-Native customers.

The First Nations Bank of Canada will be "a piece of Canadian history," announced Chief Blaine Favel of the Saskatchewan Federation of Indian Nations in early December. The federation is investing $2 million in the new bank, which has received approval from the Canadian Deposit Insurance Corporation. The TD Bank is providing $8 million in start-up funds for the new bank.

Although started in Saskatchewan, the bank will be national, with other Native groups taking shares of up to 10 per cent. No first nation will be allowed to hold more than this, says Favel. The objective is to have the bank Native-owned, but Favel expects it will also attract non-Native investors. "It is a sound business venture.... The bank is clearly going to be very profitable."

The announcement of the new bank comes shortly after the release of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples' report, which included a recommendation for a national Native bank. But Favel notes that the Saskatchewan Indians developed the concept 10 years ago.

At the launching ceremony, Prime Minister Jean Chretien said, "This time it's not government money, it's bank money. That's a lot of progress."